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In order to explore the thesis that the structure of Absalom, Absalom! is unified and purposeful, this study takes advantage of a partial transcription of the manuscript of the novel, the numerous studies of this work, and Faulkner scholarship in general. A review of the influences on Faulkner at the time of his writing Absalom, Absalom! and a consolidation of critical comment on Faulkner's structural techniques, especially in this novel, serve as an introduction to an intensive examination of the work.

For the purposes of this study, the first five chapters of Absalom, Absalom! have been designated the Mississippi chapters and the last four the Massachusetts chapters. The following structural considerations have been examined for each chapter: the number and kinds of revisions made, the division of material, the principal ordering devices, the role of the chapter in the structure of the novel, and the world created by the chapter.

Chapter I furnishes examples of revisions which move the novel toward the poetic and abstract. Like the novel as a whole, the principal organizing device in this chapter is psychological. Chapter II is conventionally plotted. Its point of view is sympathetic to Thomas Sutpen; but its juxtaposition to Chapter I tempers any evaluation made of Sutpen. Chapter III is a biography of Rosa Coldfield, told
in grotesque caricature and arranged around a single, all-absorbing event in her life: the death of Charles Bon. Chapter IV, framed by references to and a citation of Bon's letter and filled with Jason Compson's speculations, also exemplifies the techniques of juxtaposition and psychological ordering. Chapter V partakes of many of the structural qualities of modern fiction: the part that is the whole, the multi-level quest, the fusion of past and present, the reflexive image, and the mythic character. In it the central theme of the novel is revealed: denial of brotherhood on the basis of race.

An increasing awareness of the racial question characterizes the Massachusetts chapters. They are framed by a letter containing a notice of Rosa's death. A pall of death hangs over Chapter VI, a chapter with three levels of organization—the psychological, the historical, and the symbolic, all levels focusing on the life and death of Charles Etienne Bon. The biography of Thomas Sutpen guides the organization of Chapter VII, the meaning of his life being revealed by juxtaposition of various episodes in his career. Charles Bon's quest for a father determines the structural devices used in Chapter VIII. Chapter IX is ordered so that images of death and despair follow every suggestion of life and hope. The chapter calls attention to Jim Bond and leaves the reader with the question of the meaning of his life.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that the arrangement of material in *Absalom, Absalom!* is unified and purposeful. The structure evokes that despair that is the common denominator of mankind. It
reveals both the bond between men and the separation of men; and though some of the most dramatic episodes in the novel picture the union of men in brotherly love, most of the material and certainly the arrangement of the material emphasize the estrangement of men. In addition, by juxtaposing chapters, each separated from the others by its own structural and thematic qualities, Faulkner places a burden of interpretation on the reader suggestive of the burden of despair that overwhelms the protagonists of the novel.
ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

A STUDY OF

STRUCTURE

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
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By

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William Faulkner's novel *Absalom, Absalom!* has achieved widespread acclaim as a major accomplishment by a major writer. That in itself makes the work a worthy subject for study. It has also generated a controversy of sorts since by its nature it is subject to many interpretations. Consequently, there is a temptation to add one's voice to the debate. More specifically, recent scholarly interest in the structure of this novel and the publication of a partial transcription of the manuscript point the student in the direction of the technical aspects of the novel, particularly its construction. Thus, while it is with the secondary purposes of better understanding contemporary literature by examining one of its most illustrious examples and of joining with the throng of critics fascinated by this complex and ambiguous work, it is with the primary purpose of building on the structural studies done thus far that this dissertation is undertaken.

Michael Millgate has pointed out the need in Faulkner studies for a biography and for textual work and the dearth of dissertation-length

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1. Of approximately twenty studies published in the years 1968-1972, four have the word "structure" incorporated in their titles, and at least five others have the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* as their topics.

2. Gerald Langford's *Faulkner's Revision of Absalom, Absalom!* A Collation of the Manuscript and the Published Book (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971) contains a partial transcript of the manuscript, though, as Noel Polk has pointed out ("The Manuscript of *Absalom, Absalom!*" Mississippi Quarterly, 25 (Summer 1972), 359-367), there are errors in the transcription. References in this paper to the manuscript are to Langford's transcription.
studies of individual works. Biographical and textual studies are necessarily left to scholars at institutions where manuscripts, typescripts, and other materials concerning Faulkner are kept or to whom such artifacts are available. Some textual study of Absalom, Absalom! has been undertaken, the most recent of which is Gerald Langford's collation. However, Langford has dealt only with the completed manuscript, which, according to Faulkner's own testimony, is a complete revision. At present there is not a record of how the manuscript itself took shape, other than that scissors and glue were used extensively. Millgate believes that a careful study of the shaping of the manuscript might determine the phases of the construction and that such a study would be more than worthwhile since, in his view, Faulkner is a skillful technician. In addition to further study of the manuscript, there is a need for work on the typescript. According to Noel Polk, it is much marked by Faulkner's editors, they being responsible for most of the 1400 variants between the typescript and the published work. It may eventually be concluded that the finished work owes some of its strengths and weaknesses to editorial revision. Whatever the outcome of textual

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4Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, ed., Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-59 (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 76.


6"The Manuscript of Absalom, Absalom!" p. 361.
studies, the record of the genesis and composition of Absalom, Absalom! has only begun to be written, and it is not the purpose of this study to pursue such aspects of the work. The finished structure is the primary subject of this discussion.

One may be led to question the soundness of a paper on structure that virtually ignores the pre-publication arrangement and rearrangement of material. It is a legitimate question. I justify the limits of my paper by calling attention to the restricted access to textual materials and by asserting that it is the published work that has won acclaim. Mine is for the most part the study of an accomplished fact rather than an account of the journey to that accomplishment.

To establish a framework for the study of structure, I have been first of all concerned with possible influences on the artist's philosophy of structure. Second, by assessing the large body of critical comment on Absalom, Absalom! in general and its structure in particular, I have been provided with terminology and guidelines for my study. In turning to my own analysis and evaluation of the structure, I have chosen to look at the parts before looking at the whole, to see the chapters as structural entities in and of themselves as well as integral parts of the novel. I have grouped the chapters according to setting, the first five being the Mississippi chapters and the last four being the Massachusetts chapters, though they might also have been grouped according to family or race, i.e. the Coldfield chapters and the Bon chapters or the white family chapters and the black family chapters. I have come to the conclusion that the novel achieves unity out of discontinuity and rests on a sound structure.
I believe my study may lend weight to conclusions about the whole of Faulkner's work in the area of structure. Studies of *The Hamlet* and *Go Down, Moses*, for example, more and more point to the unity of these works, whereas at one time they were considered loose collections of stories. The structural relationship between the Lena story and the Joe Christmas story in *Light in August* is more highly regarded now than formerly. *Absalom, Absalom!* has been less often thought of as a loose collection, but it is a congregation of "rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales." That it achieves unity is a tribute to Faulkner's growing reputation as a master of the novelistic structure.

This study also supports the growing number of critics who find deep theological dimensions in Faulkner's writing. Much has been written about the "sin" of slavery and its social, economic, and psychological effects on the novel's characters, but this novel is concerned with more than acts of sin. It gives utterance to a state of man that is more theological than it is social or psychological. Twentieth century theologians have attempted in prose treatises to define despair. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner, rather than attempting definition, finds a symbol for despair: it is race. In this novel, it is the color of man's flesh that separates man from himself, his fellows, and his God. Through a structure that builds an increasingly heavy burden and involves an ever-expanding number of people, Faulkner evokes the despair that is the common denominator of human kind.

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CHAPTER I

INFLUENCES ON THE STRUCTURE OF ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

The influences at work on the structure of a novel written by William Faulkner in the mid-1930's may be said to be biographical, regional, cultural, and technical. Conclusions about biographical influences are at best speculative, and comments on regional and cultural influences must necessarily be general since the subject of influence is worthy of lengthy treatises in and of itself. Influence, of course, is not only received but given, and technical discussions of modern structure, by often seeming to be descriptions of this Faulkner novel, indicate that Faulkner influenced the definition of structure at least as much as his ideas of structure were influenced by others. While he drew upon the structural innovations of his time, the use he made of them helped to establish them in the canons of literary criticism.

Absalom, Absalom! was published in October, 1936. At that time, Faulkner had been married seven years; his daughter Jill was three; his two step-children, Victoria and Malcolm Franklin, both born in the Far East in the 1920's, were either in or approaching their teens; and the family had lived at Rowanoak for six years. The preceding fall and winter Faulkner had spent in Hollywood where he had gone following the death of his brother Dean in an airplane crash in November 1935. During his months in Hollywood, he is supposed to have worked as a "motion
picture doctor" on Road to Glory, Slave Ship, and Banjo on My Knee for Twentieth Century Fox. Though he received screen credits for the first two, it is not likely that much of what he wrote was retained in the final versions of the screenplays, and the part of the screenplay he wrote for Banjo on My Knee was discarded. At the time of his writing of Absalom, Absalom!, though Hollywood seemed to be unaware of it, Faulkner was recognized in the literary world as a writer of major stature.

Faulkner once told a class at the University of Mississippi that he had worked on Absalom, Absalom! for three years. Contradictory testimony comes from his French admirer, Maurice Coindreau, who has written that Faulkner wrote the novel in Hollywood in the weeks following his brother's death. Faulkner said on another occasion that he had written "inchoate fragments that wouldn't coalesce" before he wrote Pylon, and that after Pylon was published in March 1935, he began again on Absalom, Absalom!, almost rewriting "the whole thing."

1James B. Meriwether, The Literary Career of William Faulkner: A Bibliographical Study (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1961), pp. 157-158, cites George Sidney's unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of New Mexico, 1959) on Faulkner's work with screenplays. According to Sidney, Road to Glory, released September 1, 1936, was an adaptation of Wooden Crosses by Roland Dorgelès (1921), and Slave Ship, released July 2, 1937, was based on The Last Slaver by George S. King (1933).

2Millgate, The Achievement, p. 37.


5Swynn and Hlotner, p. 76.
manuscript supports this claim: it is dated on the first page, March 30, 1935, with the notation

Begun Oxford 1935
Continued California 1936
Finished Oxford 1936

On the last page of the manuscript is written

Mississippi 1935
California 1936
Mississippi, 1936

Rowanoak
31 January 1936.

The two references to California are dated 1936 and suggest that the sections of the novel that were written in Hollywood were written in the last month of his stay there.

The three most notable occurrences during the time of his writing of the novel were the publication of *Pylon*, the death of Dean, and the sojourn in California. The influence of *Pylon* on the thematic concerns and consequently the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* has been noted, Millgate calling attention to Faulkner's interest in both novels in the elusive and malleable nature of fact. On the other hand, the possible influence of Dean's death and the effect on the novel of Faulkner's stay in Hollywood have not been much discussed, wisely perhaps, since such influence is largely speculative. It is possible to suggest an influence on the setting of the novel by noting the geographical location of Faulkner during the time he worked on the novel. The local setting of the first half of the novel corresponds to the spring and summer which Faulkner spent in Mississippi, and the alien Massachusetts setting of the second half of the work corresponds to the fall and winter he spent

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6 The *Achievement*, p. 152.
in California. The letter from Mississippi, evoking memories of that state, which Quentin receives from his father in the sixth chapter, may have biographical parallels. Even the decision to place the recollection of Sutpen and his "first" family between the opening and the closing of the letter may have its parallel in biography since, in human habit, memories often flood in upon the reading and rereading of letters from home.

Another aspect of Faulkner's California stay, his work on the adaptation of *The Last Slaver*, may have been responsible for many of the images of the violence and suffering of the Haitian people, images that fill one section of the seventh chapter, the chapter that recounts Sutpen's journey from Virginia to Mississippi. It would be interesting to know when Faulkner decided to have Sutpen come to Mississippi by way of Haiti, to see if any of the passages in the second chapter (the story of Sutpen's first five years in Jefferson) about Sutpen's life before he came to Mississippi are written in the same color ink as the Haitian passages in Chapter VII.7 Another concern that a study of the manuscript may shed light on is the question of whether Faulkner originally intended the novel to be a further study of Quentin and his preoccupation with incest and decided only about half way through to introduce miscegenation,

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7That Sutpen came to Mississippi by Haiti might have been inspired by Hollywood, but that he came by way of a plantation front door was probably an old idea. Millgate reports that the protagonist in an unpublished short story, "The Big Shot," written before January 30, 1930, had also gone to the front door of the "big house" with a message from his father and had been sent in no uncertain terms around to the back door (*Achievement*, pp. 159-160).
or whether Faulkner intended all along that Bon be both brother and part Negro. Since the question of black blood does not really surface until Rosa's chapter (V), it can be speculated that the problem of miscegenation was not part of the original conception of the novel, and that Faulkner's work on both *Slave Ship* and *Banjo on My Knee*, by bringing the racial issue to the foreground, helped him to coalesce those "inchoate fragments." Of course, it is just as possible that the miscegenation theme was a result of his feeling after writing *Light in August* that the subject was worthy of further treatment. He continued to develop the theme in *Go Down, Moses* and *The Reivers*, evidence that it was an abiding concern.

The influence of Hollywood may also be found in the construction of some of the scenes. For example, the terse dialogue and scenic descriptions in the bivouac passage in the eighth chapter may owe something to Faulkner's being accustomed to the requirements of a screenplay. J. R. Raper suggests that the influence of such movie techniques as slow motion and stopped motion, imposition of one image over another, close and distant shots, and varying camera angles also had an effect on the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!*

The sudden transition from local to "foreign" that occurs between Chapters V and VI is also a transition of mood. While the images of

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climate and place, the attitudes of the Mississippi narrators, and the
correct of their stories are full of melancholy, they do seem much less
depressing and gloomy than the images of the Massachusetts cold, the
distraught attitude of Quentin, and the futility and despair revealed
in the stories of the lineage of Sutpen and his first wife. The sense
of guilt that so debilitates Quentin in the second half may be an
externalization of Faulkner's feeling of personal guilt for his brother's
death. Dean's death, too, may have influenced the sense of futility
that is so strong in Chapter VI (which centers on Charles Etienne St.
Valery Bon) and may have helped to shape the poignant scenes of brotherly
care concern between Charles Bon and Henry Sutpen in Chapter VIII. The in-
fluence of separation from home and bereavement for a loved one may have
been responsible for the somber mood of the second half of the novel.

Perhaps more important than biographical influences, however, are
regional influences, the qualities of the novel's structure that come
from Faulkner's Southern orientation, factors such as the Southerner's
love of rhetoric, his feeling for the past, the relationship between the
black and white, the respect for Bible and family. One expected Southern
flavoring is absent from the novel, however. Absalom, Absalom! lacks
inumor; it is an absence that intensifies the air of futility and despair.

The eloquent language that is so often heard from Southern pulpit
and platform is also found in Absalom, Absalom! The very heart of the

9Faulkner owned the plane in which his brother crashed and had encouraged Dean in his flying ambitions.
novel, structurally speaking, is a rhetorical flight of massive dimensions. Rosa's chapter soars on the wings of words unfettered by precise denotations, of phrases sometimes held together only by their position on the page; Rosa seemingly unaware of their apparent lack of sense. The chapter's grandiloquence is by no means the novel's only rhetorical flourish, although it surpasses the others because it is sustained for the length of the chapter. The effect of such a linguistic structure is overpowering. One has only to remember his first reading of the novel to realize the extent to which the imposing verbiage is a burden. Appropriately, the reader's effort to understand syntax and diction complements the narrators' struggles to deal with interpretation and responsibility.

The feeling for the past, which has been the subject of much of the comment on Faulkner's work, influences the structure of Absalom, Absalom! A novel that begins in the present, whose main character is considered by some to be Quentin Compson, a member of the present generation, whose last chapter is based on the troubling presence of Jim Bond, also of the present generation, is nevertheless thought of as a novel about the past. Though structurally the novel as a whole and in its parts begins and ends in the present, the bulk of its material conjures up the past, and thus, through sheer weight, the past governs the present. It is a condition of both the novel and the South in Faulkner's time.

The racial element of Southern life saturates the novel but comes to be a prime topic only in the last chapters. The black faces always in the background in the novel, the hint of power and knowledge contained in some
of them, especially Gytie's, prepare the way for the climactic
revelation of Sutpen to Henry and the violent confrontation between
Henry and Bon. In the novel, as in the region, the ingredients for
violence are always present. The explosions do occur as in the case
of the murder of Bon. But the admission of cause, in this case fear of
miscegenation, is only slowly and painfully brought to the surface and
even then pushed quickly below where it hangs suspended with its
potential for destruction and despair. The timorous refusal to deal
with the problem is illustrated by Quentin. He has revealed to Shreve
that he learned of Bon's being part Negro during his trip to Sutpen's
Hundred with Rosa. However, he cannot bring himself to repeat the
conversation or the means by which he got the information. Neither he
nor Shreve report aloud the scene in which Sutpen revealed to Henry
that Bon had black blood. The revelation is visualized in the cold and
silence of the Harvard room. The reluctance of Quentin to speak of
miscegenation is a diffidence shared by the natives of Faulkner's
region. In structuring the novel so that the central issue remains
veiled, Faulkner reflected the condition of the South.

The reverence for the Sacred Word, the omnipresence of the Holy
Scriptures, and the pervasiveness of biblical lore in Southern life and
thought may have been influential in Faulkner's choice of structure as
it certainly was in his choice of title. The welding together of
numerous and varied kinds of material, widely ranging in scope, is a
structural characteristic of both Absalom, Absalom! and the Bible.
Like the scriptural collators, Faulkner combines history, legend,
poetry, drama, epistles, and prophecy. As did the Genesis redactor, he offers more than one version of the story of Creation, Quentin recounting the creation of Sutpen's Hundred three times in the first chapter, his father giving it fuller treatment in the second chapter. Like St. John in his Revelation, Faulkner foresees the future in cryptic prophecy in the last chapter. He adds his chronicles and genealogy--the list of who begat whom--to the novel. The number of voices, too, has its parallel in the Bible. Thematically, Rosa's complaint that it is the righteous who suffer, though ironic, is reminiscent of Job. Bon's quest for a birthright is familiar, as is the ironic "true heirs" theme with its echoes of Pauline teachings. Biblical themes in a novel are not unique, of course, but biblical structure for a novel does represent a departure from conventional technique. The all-inclusive nature of the material, like the massive accumulation of words, becomes a structural device for creating a burden.

The importance of family in Southern life also has its effect on the structure of Absalom, Absalom! Biography and genealogy are basic elements of design, though the history of Sutpen and his black descendants in the last four chapters is an ironic use of the traditional genealogy, since tracing the family back to a Civil War hero is rarely done through his black heirs. Faulkner has done so in Go Down, Moses, the difference between that novel and this being that the black descendants of old Carothers McCaslin and a slave woman are a stronger and more vibrant breed of men than the heirs of Sutpen and Eulalia Bon. Also, McCaslin recognized and provided for his black heirs in his will,
whereas Sutpen, while he provided for Clytie, his slave child, refused the claims of the Bons. The arrangement of the chapters in Absalom, Absalom! is significant: the early emphasis on Sutpen's second family is overshadowed by the attention later given to his first family. The emergence of the black members of the family has a devastating effect on the lives and pretensions of its white members, even though not all the white folks are aware that the black relationships are present. The ties of family are strong in Southern life, and the novel reveals tellingly just how strong claims of blood can be.

One other condition of the region that is typical of much of Faulkner's work is absent from this novel—the humor of the tall tale. The tales that in other novels and other situations might have provoked laughter are in this novel merely pathetic: the aunt doggedly drumming up an audience for Ellen's wedding, a horse race on the way to church, the methods by which the lawyer duped Bon's mother, Henry's country awkwardness in New Orleans, the antics of Sutpen and Wash Jones in the country store and in the scuppernoog arbor. The possibilities for humor are present, but Faulkner does not make use of them. There are no Jason Compsons or Anse Bundrens or Lucas Beauchamps or Snopes cousins in Absalom, Absalom! There are no comic interludes to relieve the atmosphere of gloom and despair created by the narrators. The totally

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10Some critics speak of Shreve's point of view as being light and humorous. L. G. Levins, for example, sees the structure of Shreve's narrative as that of a tall tale since Shreve exaggerates and uses comic descriptions. ("The Four Narrative Perspectives in Absalom, Absalom!" MLA, 85 (January 1970), 444-46). Shreve's flippancy does provide a light touch, but his humor does not provoke laughter.
serious nature of the work is not typically Faulknerian, or typically Southern, but the absence of levity serves to strengthen the structure of the novel. By refusing to release the reader, the writer creates the same burden for him that he creates for Quentin. There is no escape from involvement.

The Southerner has often been guilty of hiding behind his high-sounding phrases, of living in his memories of the past, of pretending that racial relationships are normal, of giving lip-service to biblical truths and family bonds, of jesting so that reality will not intrude. Faulkner, by massing words in such a way as to make them a burden, by overwhelming the present with the past, by making black faces all pervasive and inescapable, by engulfing empty creeds in the comprehensive, all-inclusive material of life, by overpowering pure blood lines with the demands of brotherhood, and by removing the jest, has stripped away pretense and superficiality. The structure of the novel is such that the burden of man's responsibility to his fellows is inescapable.

Impinging on the reasonably ordered life of Faulkner's region and on the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* were various social and intellectual movements that both challenged and shaped the views men held of himself in the world of the 1920's and 1930's. Southerners were not alone in their longing for the past. The period between the world wars was a time of disillusionment with the present, which led to memories of the past and consequently to new definitions of time. Disillusionment with the external world coincided with renewed and extensive
research in psychology and anthropology, researches into the interior
man, which, in some quarters, intensified the distrust of externally
held values, dogma, and slogans. For some writers, intuition became
more important in the formulation of universal truths than logical or
empirical evidence. The structure of Absalom, Absalom! reflects these
various developments.

Faulkner's handling of time owes much to the influence both direct
and indirect of Henri Bergson, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust. In
literature and philosophy the past came to be regarded in three ways:
past as present, past in the form of conscious memory, and past un-
consciously triggered and fused with the present. In Absalom,
Absalom! the four major points of view are influenced by these
definitions. For Miss Rosa the past is present, her life having
stopped forty-three years ago. For Quentin and his father the past is
in the form of conscious memory, Mr. Compson recalling the past as a
result of Quentin's questions. For Quentin and Shreve the past is both
conscious memory and unconscious fusion with the present, the fusion
being triggered in one instance by the cold of the dormitory room, a

11This conclusion is a synthesis drawn from several sources: Leon
Edel, The Psychological Novel, 1900-1950 (New York: J. B. Lippincott,
1955); Howard Ross, The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust (New York:
Macmillan, 1962); John Hagan, "Déjà vu and the Effect of Timelessness
in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!" Bucknell Review, 11 (March 1963), 33;
Michael F. Moloney, "The Enigma of Time: Proust, Virginia Woolf, and
Faulkner," Thought, 32 (1957), 75; Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern
Literature," Sewanee Review, 53 (1945), rpt. in The Widening GyrE:
Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature (New Brunswick, New Jersey:
cold which they realize not as a Massachusetts winter but as a winter on
a Southern battlefield during the Civil War. Their lives are fused with
those of Henry and Bon as they endure the last months of the war before
returning to Sutpen's Hundred. The arrangement of the chapters in the
novel is also influenced by these conceptions of the past. In the total
scheme of the novel, the first chapter is past, but the reader knows it
as present for five chapters. Like Miss Rosa, the reader knows the
past as present.

The arrangement of chapters also owes something to the influence of
psychology. Both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung have left their marks on the
literature of Faulkner's time and consequently on Absalom, Absalom!
Freud's delvings into the personal sub-conscious to reveal and release
repressed memories were accompanied by Jung's views that once personal
history was set free from the unconscious there yet remained another
kind of content, primordial images, universal archetypes, the "collective
unconscious." Faulkner, both in his use of language and his arrange-
ment of material owes much to Freud. For example, Rosa, released from
forty-three years' repression, pours out an emotional torrent in the
fifth chapter from which the reader derives meaning more by grasping at
images emerging from time to time in the verbiage than by understanding
any logical syntactical progression. Quentin, who exemplifies the
Southerner who is self-conscious about the topic of race, fears release;

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of Literature, ed. James William Johnson (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:
and the order in which he tells the story of the South to Shreve is influenced by his reluctance to bring the subject to the surface. He deals first in his story with the community knowledge of the Sutpens and the Coldfields and their life in Jefferson (Chapters I-V), material that is familiar and accepted. Then he moves very reluctantly into uncomfortable aspects of the story: the nature of the sorely troubled life of Charles Etienne de St. Valery Bon and the cause for Sutpen's inhumane and finally degrading course of life (Chapters VI and VII). He cannot finally bring himself to verbalize the fact that Charles Bon was part Negro and that the cause of his death was attempted miscegenation (Chapters VIII and IX). Quentin remains repressed at the end of the novel.

There is also a Jungian quality in the arrangement of the chapters. There is a movement from the personal memories of Rosa, the community memories of Quentin's father, and the Southern memories of Quentin to the universal memory which gives significance to the individual memories. The emergence of the black side of the family tree in the last four chapters follows Rosa's confession in the fifth chapter that at the touch of Clytie's hand, she (Rosa) knew Clytie as sister. The personal confession of racial sisterhood, preceding as it does the revelation of the racial dimensions of the family, seems to have triggered this revelation. What is disclosed is a universal condition manifested in racial terms: the separation of man from himself, from other men, and from God. The identity crisis suffered by Charles Etienne de St. Valery Bon as a result of his racial heritage exemplifies
separation of man from himself; Thomas Sutpen's inhumane treatment of others after being himself inhumanely treated by a black man illustrates separation of man from others; Charles Bon's search for a father, that is, for a source of being, is a search for union of man with God. His rejection, racially inspired, is symbolic of separation of man from the origin of his being. The terrible consequence of separation is countered by an image just as awesome in its implications: Jim Bond, the mulatto idiot, has no identity crisis; he is humane in his response to his fellows; and he knows the source of his providence— it is Clytie. His voice howling in the night after the fire at Sutpen's Hundred is the anguished cry of man suddenly cut off from his own identity, from his companions, and from his source of providence. It is an image that comes out of the depths of man's memory.

Other images, allusions, and episodes are drawn from the Jungian collective unconscious. The image of Quentin's still body in the cold and dark room at the end of the novel is an image of death, a primordial image of the man who, unable to confess his guilt because he refuses to deal with his condition, suffers thereby a kind death. The images of mountaintop and valley, fiery furnace and abysmal swamp that accompany Thomas Sutpen's story are primordial images. The episode in which Sutpen's Hundred's old mansion burns to the ground, signifying as it does the dissolution of a family, is one that has parallels in racial memory. Thus, the novel is both individualised and universal, and it probes both the personal and the collective unconscious.
One further cultural influence that bears on the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* has to do with the nature of truth. The disillusionment that led to a turning backward in time and inward into the unconscious also led to the questioning of established values. The challenge to cherished and so-called proven truths, that is, truth based on logical and scientific observation, led to a search for a different kind of truth, a truth arrived at by intuition and by imagination. It was a truth that might not apply in every circumstance and thus was subject to reevaluation. While Faulkner might have been expected to revere tradition because of his Southern heritage, he could not help but be affected by the challenges to traditional principles occurring in some areas of Western thought. One of the most often documented influences on Faulkner was Joseph Conrad, who explains truth in this way: factual truth and truthful ideas come and go with the passage of time, with new discoveries and new evidence. The writer must be concerned with a different kind of truth—a "truth, manifold and one, underlying" every aspect of the "visible universe." It is the truth sought in the deepest recesses of man, in that area where there is a felt bond with all creation—the dead, the living, the yet unborn. The truth lies in every aspect of creation and may be rendered visible by examining tenderly and faithfully any "passing phase of life." The artist, guided by the "stammerings of his conscience" has to realize that at best he can only catch a glimpse of such truth before time goes on.  

Absalom, Absalom! is also often examined. The most obvious effect is the lack of an authoritative voice or point of view, the resulting confusion of voices revealing only glimmerings of truth. Another effect is the use of Shreve as a narrator who must for the most part imagine the story of Sutpen, since he has no first-hand experience with the South. His imaginative narration is truth in one of its manifestations.

The kinds of techniques, some of which have already been mentioned, that Faulkner used to create a structure that makes the reader aware of the intuitive nature of truth and the burden of knowledge and responsibility were influenced by his literary peers and predecessors but probably only indirectly. It has been said that he imitated and experimented in his early novels, but that by the time he came to write Absalom, Absalom!, the conclusions he had reached as a result of their successes or failures were more influential than the work of any one else. However much Faulkner adapted and refined them, the structural devices of his time are everywhere apparent in Absalom, Absalom! These devices have a direct relationship to the cultural conditions outlined above. To create the time schemes of a people living on memories, there are such techniques as coalescing images, repetition, recapitulation, parallelism, and artistic arrangements of material. To reveal the psychological dimension of life, both personal and collective, there are the devices of stream-of-consciousness, symbol,

11Raper, p. 9.
and myth, especially mythical quest. To achieve ambiguity, there are such means as ironic language, "reflexive references," impressionism, irresolution, multiple points of view, and mixtures of artistic forms.15

Coalescing images, recapitulation, and parallelism are all forms of repetition. An image, story, phrase, or structure repeated in varying situations throughout a work gives the reader a sense of recognition, of having been there before. The effect is not only déjà vu16 but the fusion of the past with the present. The image of wisteria that is present in Rosa's house, on Quentin's front porch, in his Harvard room, and at Sutpen's Hundred during Rosa's youth has the effect of pulling all these times and places together into one time and place. The sense of sequential time is displaced and the past comes back to live in the present.

Artistic rather than chronological resolutions also tend to negate the sense of ongoing time. To design an artistic pattern, the fiction writer borrows organizing principles from the poet, the painter, and the musician.17 The piece may be an arrangement of images or symbols.

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16Bagan, pp. 31, 33.

or even episodes in a pattern that has nothing to do with sequence or logical progression. The arrangement of the Massachusetts chapters in *Absalom, Absalom!* is an example: the life of Charles Etienne Bon is pictured before that of his grandfather and father. By being painted in first, the picture of Etienne becomes the dark and ominous background over which the pictures of Sutpen, Bon, and Bond are painted. To present Etienne's biography first is not only to set aside natural sequence but also to impede logical conclusions: Etienne's troubled life is not the consequence of his father's and grandfather's actions nor is it the cause of his son's actions.

The psychological level of existence is served by several well-known and much discussed devices: stream-of-consciousness, symbol, and mythical quest, devices which in the case of stream-of-consciousness attempt to capture an interior state by making language less than rational and in the case of symbol and myth attempt to capture a universal condition by making language more than literal. The thought processes of a Quentin and the rhetorical excesses of a Rosa are forms of stream-of-consciousness. Charles Bon's name, his mysterious origin, and Rosa's view of him as redeemer help to make him a symbolic character. His search for identity, for a father, and for recognition becomes representative. His is the archetypal experience or myth: it is a universal quest. 18

The quest is particularly appropriate for a novel that reflects those cultural developments that redefined the past, challenged established values, and searched for truth in the innermost parts of man. The structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* is such that the quest is not just that of the characters in the fiction; it is the very nature of the work itself. The reader, too, is made to participate in the search and the inquiry. He must weigh the ironic language, hold meaning in suspension, continually reevaluate, listen to multiple voices, submit to the appeal of all the arts, and finally realize that there are no certainties. The end of the quest only points to further questions about the nature of existence.

The writer raises the questions about the nature of truth in his use of language. Faulkner's reflective, indecisive choice of words is a method by which he avoids positive assertion:

Yes, Henry would know now, or believe that he knew now; anymore he would probably consider anti-climax though it would not be, it would be anything but that, the final blow, stroke, touch, the keen surgeon-like compounding which the now shocked nerves of the patient would not even feel, not know that the first hard shocks were the random and crude.

Faulkner's use of the oxymoron and his unconventional punctuation are habits that force nonliteral meaning on language as, for instance, in

19 "The modern novel is an enquiry, but an enquiry which creates its own meaning as it goes along." Alain Robbe-Grillet, "The Writer's Only Commitment Is to Literature," *Programme and Notes for the International Writers' Conference* held in Edinburgh, August 1962, pp. 43-44.

20 *Absalom*, p. 113.
the phrase "electric furious immobile urgency." Here, context so subverts the word "immobile" that it is at best ambiguous if it has not lost its literal meaning completely. At the same time it qualifies the other three words because it so contradicts them in its literal import. This arrangement of words so as to broaden the range of their meanings is, according to Frye, ironic. Multiple meanings and non-literal meanings for words are characteristics of modern literature.\(^2\)

Faulkner's poetic habit of using words outside their normal parts of speech or without standard inflections has the same effect. In one passage he used the word "interdict" as adjective and as uninflected verb: "dark interdict ocean" and "whose marriage he [Sutpen] had "interdict." Who can say with certainty what the word means after having read this passage. Joseph Frank has given another term to the kind of word usage just described: "reflexive reference." A word or phrase appears in each of several succeeding word groups, and not until the end of the total structure does the complete meaning of that word or phrase become clear. This particular structuring method is a result of the attempt to create the world of the timeless moment as opposed to the world of ongoing time. Complete meaning comes all at once at

\(^2\)Absalom, p. 160.


\(^2\)Absalom, pp. 189-190. In the manuscript, the second "interdict" is "forbidden."
the end; until then its parts have to be held in suspension. 24 This kind of meaning is cumulative rather than progressive, artistic rather than logical.

Suspended meaning is an impressionistic technique. Robert Zoellner calls attention to the impressionistic quality of the Faulknerian sentence: "a meandering linkage of apparently unrelated elements," a seemingly incoherent and undisciplined structure which is actually controlled and supported by a frame sentence. The effect, however, is not chaos, but cumulation. 25 Frank Baldanza also notes the necessity for holding meaning in suspension, for holding large amounts of material in the memory until all the subordination is in and a sentence is finished or until all of any unit of material is complete. 26 The following sentence illustrates not only the "meandering linkage" and the necessity for holding globs of material in memory but also contains one of the many images of black men that are scattered throughout the novel, images whose cumulative effect is that blackness is omnipresent and potentially explosive:

He [Sutpen] didn’t remember whether it was that winter and then spring and then summer that overtook and passed them on the road, or whether they overtook and passed in slow succession the seasons as they descended, or whether it was the descent itself that did it, and they not progressing parallel in time but

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25 "Faulkner's Prose Style in Absalom, Absalom!" American Literature, 30 (1959), 497.

26 "Faulkner and Stein: A Study in Stylistic Intransigence," Georgia Review, 13 (Fall 1959), 281.
descending perpendicularly through temperature and climate—a (you couldn’t call it a period because as he remembered it or as he told Grandfather he did, it didn’t have either a definite beginning or a definite ending. Maybe attenuation is better)—an attenuation from a kind of furious inertness and patient immobility, while they sat in the cart outside the doors of doggeries and taverns and waited for the father to drink himself insensible, to a sort of dreamy and destinationless locomotion after they had got the old man out of whatever shed or outhouse or barn or ditch and loaded him into the cart again, and during which they did not seem to progress at all but just to hang suspended while the earth itself altered, flattened and broadened out of the mountain cove where they had all been born, mounting, rising about them like a tide in which the strange harsh rough faces about the doggery doors into which the old man was just entering or was just being carried or thrown out (and this one time by a huge bull of a nigger, the first black man, slave, they had ever seen, who emerged with the old man over his shoulder like a sack of meal and his—the nigger’s—mouth loud with laughing and full of teeth like tombstones) swam up and vanished and were replaced: the earth, the world, rising about them and flowing past as if the cart moved on a treadmill.²⁷

Impressionistic techniques, like ironic language, derive meaning from extra-literary sources, from cumulative effects as well as from literal denotation.

While there is at the end of a sentence or at the conclusion of a series of words, images, or even chapters a resolution, it is a resolution that must be qualified. Each part in the sentence and each word, image, or chapter in the series carries its own meaning at the same time that it contributes to the whole. Further, the meaning that comes at the end may be inconclusive. Since the reader has seen a word or image continually being qualified by a new usage of that word or image, he realizes that the last usage is not necessarily the ultimate

²⁷Absalom, pp. 224-225.
one, that it, too, is subject to further qualification and evaluation. The image of Thomas Sutpen affords an example. The musing ghost that Quentin observes is qualified by the demon that Rosa describes, which is in turn modified by the citizen of Jefferson that Mr. Compson sees. The justified and determined man seen by Sutpen himself must also be evaluated in terms of the judgment made by Shreve: "a jackal in... a rockpile."28 The images are reflexive both backward and forward: meaning is open-ended rather than conclusive.29

Faulkner's decision to place the first part of the letter about Rosa's death at the beginning of Shreve and Quentin's conversation and the last part at the end of their remembrances has something of the quality of open-endedness. The first of the letter has had to be held in suspension through the long recapitulation and recreation of the life of the Bon side of the Sutpen line. The conclusion of the letter brings to an end the story of the past: the ugly side of the Southern story has emerged from between the lines of Compson's letter about Rosa. But the conclusion of the letter does not relieve or resolve. Its meaning is not ultimate but subject to further evaluation and question: why is the revelation of the Bon lineage framed by a death notice; why is the recreation of this portion of the past sparked by knowledge of Rosa's death? The completion of the letter is not conclusive for another obvious reason: it is immediately followed by new material, Shreve's

28 *Absalom*, p. 178.

prophecy for the future that in time all men will come to be sons of Jim Bond. The prophecy qualifies any resolution brought about by the end of the letter. In its brevity and cryptic phrasing, it initiates a new inquiry into meaning; since it is abruptly concluded, it is a quest the reader must continue without Faulkner's help. The suspension of the reader at the end of the novel is typical of the structure of modern fiction.

The use of multiple voices and the borrowing of methods from a number of arts and disciplines for use in the novel are also characteristic of fiction in Faulkner's time. The disillusionment that marked the period between the wars created a negative attitude toward authority, an attitude that accounts at least in part for the lack of an authoritative point of view and the rise of multiple voices. In _Absalom, Absalom!_ the voices are not only numerous but also, in some cases, indistinguishable, a confusion that helps create ambiguity. Compson, usually credited with being cynical and fatalistic, is also poetic like Rosa. Rosa, often cited for her shrill characterization of Sutpen as a demon, is echoed by Shreve who, though he is flippant in his characterization, also refers to Sutpen as a demon. In addition to echoing Rosa, he is said by Quentin to sound just like Compson. Quentin's own words

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30 Scholes and Kellogg, p. 264.
and thoughts continually merge with those of both Shreve and Mr. Compson, extending in tone from melancholy revery through cynicism to exaggeration and irreverence.\textsuperscript{31}

The merging of the voices compares to the merging of the arts, a consequence of the fading distinctions between the arts in some artistic circles. By bringing to bear on Absalom, Absalom! the techniques of all the arts, Faulkner recognizes the changes in and challenges to his own art, fiction. In his time fictional compositions could have color and pattern, shape and form; rhythm, leit-motif, refrain, and "symphonic structure";\textsuperscript{32} poetry; and, according to Scholes and Kellogg, narrative patterns other than those of fiction: those of autobiography and history, for example.\textsuperscript{33} In Absalom, Absalom! the prevailing color is black, the black of race and the black of despair. There are many refrains, especially in the speech of Rosa, and there are swirling vortical shapes. There are all varieties of narrative including Sutpen's own autobiography. The profusion of forms and voices is overwhelming. In the midst of such profusion, the reader has to be aware of the ambiguous and fleeting nature of truth, of the difficulty of determining meaning.

\textsuperscript{31}For a merging of the voices of Quentin and Shreve, see pp. 161-167. Supposedly, the italicized passages are Quentin's thoughts, but many of the words are Shreve's: "Faustus," "Creditor," "demon." Also, in the midst of thought, Quentin answers aloud as if the words he had been hearing had not been in his thoughts but had come from Shreve. For a merging of Quentin's and Mr. Compson's voices, see pp. 207-208. The passage immediately following the italicized thoughts of Quentin may belong to either Quentin or Mr. Compson.

\textsuperscript{32}Edel, p. 137. \textsuperscript{33}Nature of Narrative, p. 151.
while the data keep shifting. To be present in such a world is analogous to hanging in limbo over an abyss, knowing that the next moment will be the same as the last one and that there is no relief from such a situation. Interpretation becomes a matter of faith rather than certainty.

Influenced perhaps by personal separation from home and family, certainly by the attitudes of his region and his civilization, and in his craft both influenced by and influential upon his literary associates, Faulkner has created a thoroughly modern novel. Firmly rooted in his region and yet open to the currents of his time, he has created a fictional world that is both Southern and universal.
CHAPTER II

CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS OF FAULKNER'S STRUCTURE

The structure of Absalom, Absalom! has not been the subject of a major study, but numerous articles have focused on the organization of the novel, and many commentators have referred briefly to structural principles in discussions of other aspects of the work. This chapter will be devoted to the comment that has been made both on the general principles of organization in the whole body of Faulkner's work and on the structure of Absalom, Absalom! Some critics note the particularly modern qualities of the novel's structure, while others see structural principles borrowed from various traditional modes and genres of literature such as tragedy and epic. Still other readers, though recognizing the novel's relationships to Faulkner's work as a whole, to the time in which it was written, and to literary tradition, concentrate on its internal relationships, the organization of its parts.

The vision out of which Faulkner structured his novels is given expression in one often-quoted letter to Malcolm Cowley:

As regards any specific book, I'm trying primarily to tell a story, in the most effective way I can think of, the most moving, the most exhaustive. But I think even that is incidental to what I am trying to do, taking my output (the course of it) as a whole. I am telling the same story over and over, which is myself and the world. Tom Wolfe was trying to say everything, get everything, the world plus "I" or filtered through "I" or
the effort of "I" to embrace the world in which he was born and walked a little while and then lay down again, into one volume. I am trying to go a step further. This I think accounts for what people call the obscurity, the involved formless "style," endless sentences. I'm trying to say it all in one sentence, between one Cap and one period. I'm still trying, to put it all, if possible, on one pinhead. I don't know how to do it. All I know is to keep on trying in a new way. I'm inclined to think that my material, the South, is not very important to me. I just happen to know it, and don't have time in one life to learn another one and write at the same time. Though the one I know is probably as good as another, life is a phenomenon but not a novelty, the same frantic steeplechase toward nothing everywhere and man stinks the same stink no matter where in time.  

The desire to "say it all in one sentence," to reduce the multi-faceted career of man to one syntactical structure is one organizational principle of Faulkner's work. It is a principle that lends itself to what Millgate calls a "circular and centripetal structural technique," a "structural tendency that is not outwards but inwards, not centrifugal, but centripetal."" Conrad Aiken, referring specifically to Absalom, Absalom! speaks, too, of the inward turning and the circular form: "there is no beginning and no ending properly speaking, and therefore no logical point of entrance." The structure suggested by these two critics is that of a narrowing gyre.

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2Achievement, p. 286.

Another structural principle noted by Millgate is "Faulkner's tendency to work with blocks of material, so that the structural process becomes primarily a question of achieving the optimum disposition of relatively discrete units," to place material so that there is "ironic juxtaposition," "illuminating interreflection," and "constant reverberation." Juxtaposition of blocks of material is a structural quality also discussed by Edmond L. Volpe. He calls it "montage structuring," a process that enables Faulkner to "tell a story and at the same time explore the social, historical, and moral significance of that story." Warren Beck speaks of "plot-paralleling with essential thematic reciprocations." Walter J. Slatoff defines Faulkner's structure in a similar fashion, but he is not as complimentary.

Faulkner's dominant principle of ordering is the persistent placement of entities of all sorts into highly tense relationships with one another ... a curiously complex and puzzling kind of ordering principle, since it contains within itself a kind of disorder and disintegration and works against the attainment of any final, over-all order and unity.

Slatoff's failure to find order and unity in Faulkner's work is a result of his belief that Faulkner intended to be inconclusive. Linda Wagner,

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1Achievement, p. 287.
on the other hand, does not see any lack of unity. For her, each block or each aspect of a work reflects the overall meaning. Like the mobile, the units of which are arranged so that movement of one creates a corresponding reaction of the others, Faulkner's blocks of material are at once separate structures and one structure. Interpretations of the mobile are relative to changing conditions of air and light and to the position of the observer, but there always remains a slender but necessary thread or wire to govern the movement of the mobile and thus preserve its essential unity.

Hyatt H. Waggoner also recognizes spatial rather than temporal structure, and he comments that spatial structure lends itself to an "existential understanding" of a novel: meaning is tentative rather than ultimate; the reader, given the blocks of material, discovers rather than receives truth.

Structure in Faulkner's works is the product of a created, not an assumed, truth. But the creation is undertaken for the purpose of discovery, and the building blocks used in the created structure are given.

By allowing the reader to participate in the creative process, the structure absorbs another block of material, thus encompassing a larger world. It is a method that allows Faulkner, as Waggoner said, to be open to all experience.  

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Critics essentially agree that a basic ordering device of Faulkner is the placement of independent units so that each entity affects all the others. But whereas Millgate points to a structure that turns inward to a "crystallization" of essential truths, Waggoner suggests a structure that opens outward to embrace the diversity of human experience. Conclusions similar to Waggoner's are drawn by others. John L. Longley states that each retelling of Sutpen's story in Absalom, Absalom! widens the implications of the story. Duncan Aswell notes that when Faulkner telescopes time by narrating two events distant in time back to back, he is suggesting that one action contains within it all its consequences. Multiple consequences of one event and multiple interpretations of one story—the movement from the center outward is one way of defining Faulkner's structure. This interpretation of Faulkner's method can be reconciled with that of Millgate: the structure has both an axis and a circumference, an inward and an outward turning of the gyre. From the Jungian point of view, man turns inward to find the whole experience of the human race; from the modern writer's point of view, there is one story with many manifestations. Faulkner expressed the reconciliation in the phrase "myself and the world."

10 Achievement, p. 287.
The critics cited thus far have pointed to a circling both inward and outward. Others have pointed to a circling around, a "backrolling," and a rambling method of structuring, a technique of indirection. It is a technique influenced both by tradition and by psychology. The oral tradition, says C. S. Brown, produces an unhurried, digressive, rambling narrative. This method of making things fall into place gradually is appropriate for an unhurried reconstruction of the past. A psychological basis is present in the comments of others. John W. Hunt notes Faulkner's tendency to discuss the significance of an event before the event itself is given, to order events in terms of their importance to a narrator rather than in the order of their occurrence. Also, instead of developing characters according to a chronological life line, says John Edward Hardy, Faulkner circles about them, avoiding direct looks. Hardy sees a thematic basis in the circling, "back-rolling" syntax of Faulkner: generations turning back on themselves in incest. Irving Howe believes the reason for the indirect approach is that "Faulkner is probing the under-tissues of the past, fearful he will locate some secret evil and that is hardly to be done with brisk

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13 "Faulkner's Use of the Oral Tradition," Georgia Review, 22 (Summer 1968), 165.


Whether the glimmer of truth exposed is painful or not, the method of indirection places the burden of discovering that truth on the reader. The nonsequential arrangement of material and the "obscurity, the involved formless 'style' [and] endless sentences" have the effect of separating reader from meaning. The form thus symbolizes the separation of man from man that some call despair, that Faulkner called the "human heart in conflict with itself, or with others, or with environment."  

Another principle of Faulkner's structure is derived from his experience as a poet as well as from the methods of his literary peers. Richard P. Adams recognizes in Faulkner's work a poetic method of organization: there are "patterns of symbolic images and ordered sequences of feeling and emotion." The building of emotional intensity is mentioned as a structural device by Henry Campbell and Ruel Foster, and Cleanth Brooks speaks of the "folk-ballad device of incremental repetition" in Absalom, Absalom!, where the structure is one "in which we are moved up from one suspended note to a higher

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suspended note and on up further still to an almost intolerable climax. The intensity of the book is a function of the structure.\textsuperscript{21}

In his effort to tell his story, Faulkner arranged varying kinds of blocks of material—episodes from past and present, stories, images, characters, plots, scenes—so that they seem to focus on a center at the same time that they expand to relate that center to all experience; he arranged these units in psychological and artistic as well as logical patterns, and, in order that the story be as moving as possible, he arranged these blocks to create an intense emotional effect. In \textit{Absalom, Absalom!} he makes use of all these principles of organization. When asked about his purpose in telling this story the way he did, Faulkner replied:

\begin{quote}
The primary job that any writer faces is to tell you a story, a story out of human experience—I mean by that universal human experience, the anguishes and troubles and griefs of the human heart, which is universal, without regard to race or time or condition. He wants to tell you something which has seemed to him so true, so moving, either comic or tragic, that it's worth repeating. He's using his own poor means, which is the clumsy method of speech, of writing, to tell you that story. And that's why he invents involved style, or he invents the different techniques—he's simply trying to tell you a story which is familiar to everyone in some very moving way, a way so moving and so true that anyone would say, "Why, yes—that's so. That happens to me, can happen to anybody." I think that no writer's got time to be drawing a picture of a region, or preaching anything—if he's trying to preach you a sermon, then he's really not a writer, he's a propagandist, which is another horse. But the writer is simply trying to tell a story of the human heart in conflict with itself, or with others, or with environment in a moving way.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{22}Faulkner at West Point, pp. 50-51.
In this explanation, Faulkner mentions both story and technique, both individual and universal experience. The author's means yield the heart's truth, according to the author's vision. In responding to the novel, some critics discuss structure in terms of means, some in terms of vision, nearly all in terms of story. Some cull the story from the novel, rearrange it in logical categories and chronological order, and proceed from that point. This procedure is useful, but to rely on it completely is to distort the world view of the author and to misrepresent the technical dimension of the structure. Faulkner was telling a story and his novel yields a story, but it is a story that has other dimensions than historical, chronological, or logical ones. The basis for the structure of the novel is not a story in the traditional sense of the word. The basis for the structure of the novel is the effect of and the response to the story.

Responses to the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* have been widely varied. Some critics condemn the work on the basis of traditional theory, but most praise its modern qualities. Critics also note the correspondence between the principles of organization of this novel and certain classes of novels and certain other genres and modes. These critics fit *Absalom, Absalom!* into pre-conceived definitions, sometimes ingeniously. Another approach to the novel's structure has been the internal approach. Critics look for natural or thematic divisions or they look for focal points around which the novel is structured, and they do not always agree on what the center of the work is.
Most commentators would agree with Millgate who reserves the respectful adjectives "intricate" and "carefully articulated" for the structure of Absalom, Absalom! But some have found fault. Delmore Schwartz in 1941 felt the story line was much weakened by the implausible concern of Sutpen over the marriage of his daughter. If Sutpen's main interest was creating a dynasty by means of a pure blood line, it would have been his son's marriage that he would have been most anxious about. The marriage of a daughter who was also a second child, dynastically and realistically speaking, says Schwartz, should not have been a major concern to Sutpen.23

Aaron Steinberg believes the cycle of unreal "facts" presented in the novel represented a major flaw in the structure. Steinberg interprets a remark by Quentin, "He [Sutpen] didn't tell Grandfather that he did, but Grandfather believed he did, would have,"24 as meaning that Quentin's grandfather never really knew of Charles Bon; Quentin and Shreve just conjecture that he did. Steinberg's assertion is based on his interpretation of "would have." Grandfather would have believed Sutpen named Charles Bon himself if Grandfather had known of Charles Bon. The assertion is weak since the "would have" is reiterated in the next sentence with its subject being Sutpen, not Grandfather. "That would have been a part of the cleaning up, just as he would have done his share toward cleaning up the exploded caps and musket cartridges

24Absalom, p. 265.
after the siege . . .; he would have insisted on it maybe . . . ."

Steinberg's assertion is further weakened when one considers the next sentence: "He chose the name himself, Grandfather believed, just as he named them all . . . ." A second unreal "fact" that Steinberg frowns upon is the knowledge that Quentin got from Henry. According to Steinberg, a crazed murderer and fratricide is not a reliable source.25 If Steinberg is looking for reliable sources, he will have a difficult time with Absalom, Absalom!

Both Schwartz and Steinberg have placed sociological and literal truth above fictional and imaginative truth, and both have defined structure in terms of story pattern. The story is implausible; therefore the structure is weak. John Sherwood also criticizes the novel for improbable elements in the story pattern. Traditional plots of incest and the lost child are inappropriate in modern literary realism, says this critic,26 failing to recognize the place of the archetypal pattern in modern fiction. The role of the story is placed in perspective for these story-oriented theorists by Marvin Klotz who believes that story is secondary to theme, a situation that modern critics call myth-making.27 The story pattern is important only in so much as it is an expression of something larger than itself, the universal story of the human heart in conflict with itself or in search of meaning.


The use of archetypal patterns is one modern quality of the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* As has been pointed out, it is also modern in that it is spatial, in that it borrows techniques from other arts and from psychology, and in that it relies on the truth of the imagination. These modern qualities have been the focus of much critical commentary. Both Klotz and Aiken describe the spatial technique of holding meaning in suspension with understanding coming all at once when the last block of material is placed. According to Klotz,

The whole sorry history of the rise to opulence and the fall to idiocy of a family because its attitude toward miscegenation . . . prevented any other alternative, is designed to come clear all at once when the reader is permitted finally to understand the events about which, before the essential information is provided, he, like Shreve, could only puzzle.\(^{26}\)

Aiken reminds the reader that what may seem complete at one point in the novel is not really complete "until the very last stone is in place."\(^{29}\)

When Faulkner reviewed Joseph Hergeshcimer's *Linda Condon*, he said it was not a novel but a "lovely Byzantine frieze: a few unforgettable figures in silent arrested motion, forever beyond the reach of time and troubling the heart like music."\(^{30}\) Similar appraisals of *Absalom, Absalom!* have been made. Arthur Scott has noted some of the artistic techniques Faulkner used in his "tightly plotted" novel. From the painter there is surrealism in the appeal to the unconscious rather

\(^{26}\)"Triumph over Time . . .," p. 13. \(^{29}\)Three Decades, p. 140.

than the intelligence and will and in the seeming chaotic work that is really a "calculated complexity." There is cubism in that "several successive appearances are fused into a single image" and in that an object is seen from all sides at once, inside and out. From the musician there are counterpoint and fugue-like qualities. Aiken speaks of the "fugue-like alternation of viewpoints," a technique Campbell and Foster refer to as symphonic because four narrators are all telling the same story. Counterpoint is a favorite term of critics for discussing this novel. Past and present, North and South, Rosa Coldfield and Thomas Sutpen are seen to exist in contrapuntal relationships. Donald Kartiganer examines the way that Sutpen and Bon counterpoint each other: the one creative, fate-defying, Titanic, granite-like with Puritanical severity, willing to seize what is his; the other passive, fate-embracing, human, used to luxury and extravagance, not willing to seize what is his. The one tries to overcome the system that rejected him; the other gives in to the system that rejected him. Several writers have commented on Faulkner's way of retelling the same story with variations and additions, a method that is similar to variations on a theme in a musical composition. Warren Beck explains it cogently:

31 "The Myriad Perspectives of Absalom, Absalom!" American Quarterly, 6 (Fall 1954), 213-215.
32 Three Decades, p. 140.
33 A Critical Appraisal, p. 82.
The method dramatizes a tentative approach toward relative certainties which do not preclude but rather make way for continued reestimation. It accepts as a chief constant a recurrence in modifying context, where increasingly known familiar elements fall into successively new combinations and a return to the same finds identity of another aspect . . . . The effect resembles that of leitmotif, and as with such musical composition, in Faulkner's narratives recurrence is never simple, much less careless, repetition. New context provides the reference with fresh shadings and further distinctions, and if these are discriminated, no duplications will be charged, but there will be instead the sense of an extension and an enlargement.35

Faulkner not only used techniques of the painter and the musician; he also, says J. R. Raper, recognized the usefulness of cinematic techniques in fiction. Raper points to several montage techniques used by film director and theorist, Sergei Eisenstein: one is known as "metrical montage, the use of elements (shots in film) of varying lengths to produce a conflict of rhythms." Action is accelerated at times as when Henry bursts into Judith's room, announces his murder of Bon, and leaves; and slowed down at times as when Rosa running toward the stairs is in the midst of her running forced by Clytie's hand to contemplate her deep existence in relation to black flesh. Montage effects are also achieved with contrasts of light and dark and near perspective and far perspective.36

The effect of psychology on the structure of Absalom, Absalom! is given expression by many critics. Volpe states: "The characteristics

35Man in Motion, pp. 32-33.
36"Meaning Called to Life: . . .," pp. 9, 12-13, 22.
of human thought determine its form. William Poirier believes "Quentin's acts of remembrance actually determine the form of the novel." Barbara Ewell concurs: the form of the novel is the shape of Quentin's memory. The psychological dimension is also seen in discussions of Faulkner's aim and method. Slatoff says the reader of the novel must experience its world rather than view it, a statement echoed by Ralph Ciancio: Faulkner's methodology "has one fundamental aim: to comprehend experience as a totality by encountering it from within." Similarly, Olga Vickery believes the novel gives form not to an actual story so much as to the impact of that story, the experience of the emotions on reliving this story. The techniques of stream-of-consciousness and impressionism add to the illusion of a person thinking or being caught up in memory and emotion. There is also the use of psychological time, the merging of past and present.

40 Quest, p. 245.
the absence of chronological time that is "characteristic of human thought" and characteristic of novels in a psychological age.

The reliance on the created rather than the stated truth, on imagination as opposed to logic and reason, is also a modern quality of Absalom, Absalom! Waggoner speaks of Faulkner's use of imaginative truth in the structure of the novel in this way:

The form of Absalom, Absalom! says that reality is unknowable in Sutpen's way, by weighing, measuring, and calculating. It says that without an "unscientific" act of imagination and even of faith—like Shreve's and Quentin's faith in Bon—we cannot know the things which are most worth knowing.44

Brooks, too, feels that the novel is an "imaginative construct," with the "outsider," Shreve, the participant furthest from the literal truth, doing a large share of the constructing. As an imaginative reconstruction of the past, the novel represents the difficulty and the necessity of understanding the past through the attitudes and emotions of the present.45 Kartiganer, in emphasizing that the imagined values of Charles Bon are the only reality, forgets that Quentin and Shreve have Bon's letter on which to base their imaginings; but Kartiganer's point is well taken: even people in times of sterility and despair are capable of creating in the imagination values that are humane and that represent essential truth even though they have no basis in fact.46

Though much of what is said in this novel is conjecture, the reader, through the structure, participates in creating truth.

45Yoknapatawpha Country, pp. 311-313. 46"Role of Myth," p. 301.
Though critics largely accept the modernity of the novel, they also recognize in its organization certain qualities of traditional genres. Malcolm Cowley suggests that *Absalom, Absalom!* is an allegory of the South, that Faulkner was "brooding over a social situation." Faulkner himself did not see his work as allegorical,\(^47\) but others have followed Cowley's lead in ascribing the term to the novel. It has also been termed a historical novel, not so much because its structural characteristics are similar to those of the historical novel but because its subject is history. David Stewart believes one of Faulkner's purposes in the novel was history: to present a full picture of a full century of Southern history and to justify the South.\(^48\) He is imprudent to accept some of Faulkner's evaluations of history at face value and debate them as history rather than as fictional or intuitional truth. Waggoner recognizes in *Absalom, Absalom!* that quality of the historical novel that sets forth the past as a guide and an example for the present. In terms of the construction of the novel, he suggests that the four major points of view represent modes of interpreting history: in the narration of Rosa and Compson, there is the explicit mode, Rosa making a moral judgment and Compson denying that history is meaningful and comprehensible; in the narration of Quentin and Shreve, there is the implicit mode, their judgments and understandings being derived by the reader not from their declarations but from their


\(^{48}\)"Absalom Reconsidered," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 30 (1960), 32-42.
responses to history. Inasmuch as Absalom, Absalom! reveals history as a fluid, ongoing process and historical truth as a "construct," something creatively discovered, it is for Waggoner a historical novel.\(^{49}\) Millgate, on the other hand, points out that Faulkner probes the present more than the past in this novel, examines the pressures that the past puts upon the present more than the pressures faced by inhabitants of the past. Thus it is his view that Absalom, Absalom! is not a historical novel.\(^{50}\)

From one point of view, observes Brooks, the novel is "a wonderful detective story."\(^{51}\) Hugh Holman compares it to the standard detective story in "literal construction," the motives of Charles Bon and the reason for his death being the activating questions.\(^{52}\) From another point of view, Melvin Seiden's, the novel is a melodrama with racism as the villain. Seiden also describes the structure of the novel as having for its thematic foundation "a brutal, primitive, miscegenation myth" and for its superstructure "a tragedy of alienating loves."\(^{53}\)

Seiden's recognition of three different modes in the one novel serves

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\(^{51}\) Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 311.


to point up the dilemma of students of the novel trying to adequately summarize the structure. It also serves to illustrate another modern quality: the use of all the resources of literature in one piece.

The mythic and tragic nature of Absalom, Absalom! has been often noted, and the correspondences between the structure of these modes and the structure of this novel are several. Writers concerned with myth compare the story pattern of this novel to mythical or archetypal story patterns. While they do mention other structural techniques than story, their emphasis is on story. Lennart Bjork points out analogies between Sutpen and Agamemnon and Sutpen and David. In the first analogy, both men sacrificed wife and children for a design. The principles that Sutpen defended in the Civil War were social principles, and they led him to sacrifice his own children. In the second analogy, both men had sons who destroyed them. In all three stories, a man with godlike, or godlike, power misused his power and was punished. Bjork concludes:

By fusing in his tragic vision the different values, old and modern, of Western civilization, Faulkner enables the readers to estimate the hero from different points of view. (This desire to present a multi-faceted picture of Sutpen is also achieved on another level, by letting four narrators tell the story.) In using this wide moral framework Faulkner makes clear—and here is the essence of the novel—that Sutpen, and all men like him, are condemned no matter what moral order they are measured against. David was punished within the Hebrew culture, Agamemnon within the Greek. The Christian culture, in many ways an assimilation of the two preceding ones, effected the punishment of Sutpen.54

Bjork's commentary includes reference to both thematic and technical structure, "tragic vision" and "moral framework" being thematic

54"Ancient Myths and the Moral Framework of Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!" American Literature, 35 (May 1963), 196-204.
concerns and point of view being technical structure. Kartiganer, by showing how Faulkner's story echoes mythical stories, is concerned with archetypal plot patterns. He notes the following echoes: the journey from the mountain to the plain, the rejection, the quest, the trial in the furnace (on Haiti), the awarding of the daughter to the dragon slayer (Milly to Sutpen), the decay of the domain when the king decays, and the changing order with a new day arising out of the old. Kartiganer concentrates on the role of Sutpen as a king or god who failed "to understand that the god must die and be succeeded by the elder son, or at least meet the face of that son, touch his flesh, and grapple with him for the right to rule." He is a king whose heirs are ironically groomed for kingship: Charles Valery is given the best of the food, and Jim Bond is kept clean by Clytie. He is a king who so crushes his subjects (Wash and Milly) and so defiles his sons that "the natural force itself . . . must cast out the offender." Sutpen, man of might, power, potential, "has risen up vainly against the laws of succession and blood, and has contaminated the land [he] could have made fruitful." As in tragedy, order is suggested at the end of the novel: hope is mentioned in Compson's letter.55 The contaminated land may yet be restored.

Richard P. Adams names the myth of the South as the organizing principle of this novel, a myth which he describes as an agrarian myth; the South was like Eden before the Civil War and a wasteland after. According to Adams, Rosa is the "spokesman and bard of the Southern

55"Role of Myth," pp. 357-368.
myth," and Quentin uses the myth not to explain the past so much as to explain himself. Adams recognizes the block structure in his discussion: "the layers of changing impressions, feelings, and ideas" and "the inconsistencies and often unresolved contradictions" give the effect of energy or motion while the "designs" of the characters, by which they hope to deal with life, and the narrators' explanations are inert and static, with the result that they are in tension with the effect of motion.

Walter Brylowski sees a similar myth in the novel: the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen and the South and the resulting suffering of the South. He recognizes the archetypal patterns in the story: the casting out of the scapegoat in the murder of Bon, Sutpen as priest of the cult of the South, the sins of the father carried to the fourth generation in Jim Bond. Using Northrop Frye's theory of modes, he points out four modes through which Sutpen is viewed. In other words, the reader has several coalescing images out of which to interpret Sutpen. Rosa sees him as a "hero of romance" with overtones of myth. He is both courageous and strong, with qualities bordering on the supernatural. Quentin's father views Sutpen as "low mimetic," a man like all men, neither superior to them nor to his environment. Wash Jones regards his landlord as "high mimetic," a man superior to other men. Brylowski shares this view in that he describes Sutpen as a tragic figure, the agent of his own fall. Shreve McCannon, in looking down

on a "scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity," views Sutpen in the "ironic mode." Quentin shares all these views, says Brylowski, while the reader joins Shreve, not only regarding Sutpen as frustrated but also noting the confusion of the narrators who must also be placed in the "ironic mode." While the "mythic mode" is only suggested in the above discussion, it is clear from Brylowski's work that he views Sutpen as representative of the South, a man with symbolic meaning. The myth of the South influences the structure.

Tragedy as a structural device has already been alluded to in the discussions of myth. The fall of a leader, the upheaval of nature against evil, and the restoration of order are archetypal patterns that belong to tragedy. Faulkner himself declared "the Greeks destroyed him [Sutpen], because he "violated all the rules of decency and honor and pity and compassion, and the fates took revenge on him." Longley expresses it this way: Sutpen's attempt to rise above the poverty level "is the basis of his tragedy, which is cosmic in its import. As in Lear, Macbeth, or Richard III, the very frame of Nature has been wrenched awry, and blood cries out for blood." Such a cosmic conflict, says Longley, requires "magnitude of form and content: locale and time-span, geographical spread, and analysis of the meaning of history." Thus, the nature of the tragedy is seen as giving the dimensions for the structure of the work.

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58 Faulkner in the University, p. 35.
59 Tragic Mask, pp. 209, 217.
That the scale is vast and the effect is tragedy was earlier
spelled out by Ilse Dusoir Lind: "Broadly stated, the intention of
Absalom, Absalom! is to create, through the utilization of all the
resources of fiction, a grand tragic vision of historic dimension."
The larger-than-life characters, the double focus (on both Sutpen and
the narrators), and "the noble utterance" are aspects of the technical
structure that give the novel towering proportions, and the breadth
of its subject gives it majestic thematic dimensions.

All human history in its recurrence of error and anguish is
represented in the myth of Quentin, Sutpen, and the South. In
this fall of a man, a house, a class, and a culture, we know
again, with terrifying nearness, the inexorability of "fate."
Hubris [sic] and its punishment, sin and atonement, psycho-
logical compulsions and their proliferating destructiveness—
these concepts, ancient and modern, endow Absalom, Absalom!
with the poetic reality of classic moral tragedy.60

Lind and Longley recognize the role form plays in producing the
tragedy or in advancing it, but Walter L. Sullivan feels that it is
unfortunate that Faulkner used the particular form he did for what
might otherwise have been a tragedy of a classical nature. By
viewing the plot as "a consecutive whole," Sullivan is able to point
out its "amazing conformance to established structural principles of
tragedy." Sutpen, conforming to and attempting to preserve a
particular society, comes in conflict with the basic unit of society,
the family. By putting his social ambition ahead of family, he brings
two goods into conflict, the society and the family. Using Hegel's

60 "The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!" PMLA, 70
(December 1955), 887-912; rpt. in Three Decades, pp. 276, 279, 282,
292, 304.
theory of tragedy, Sullivan concludes that Sutpen was doomed because the right which he symbolized became extreme when it sanctioned slavery, an institution which in turn threatened the integrity of the family. "A reconciliation of the conflict [could] result only in the destruction of the traditional slave state to which Sutpen [was] committed and with which he [had] himself [to be] destroyed." Using the plot structure of tragedy—exposition, rising action, climax, declining action, catastrophe—Sullivan follows Sutpen's career and finds "amazing conformance" which he thinks is not coincidental. In the novel, the protagonist, Sutpen, scores his first success by suppressing a slave revolution near the beginning of the action and gaining the material wealth that his wife brings as a dowry. Immediately thereafter fortune runs against him, and this gain toward the accomplishment of his "design" is all but wiped out—he keeps twenty Negroes—when he feels obligated to repudiate his wife and child. In Yoknapatawpha County the general trend of success continues with occasional regressions caused by the antagonism of the people in Jefferson until by the middle of the plot it seems that the "design" is accomplished. At this point the climax is reached. We do not have to wait for the counterblow; Bon and Henry quit Sutpen's Hundred on the eve of the Civil War, and Sutpen, a man of sixty [actually fifty-three, according to the chronology] now, finds himself without a male heir, while the foundations on which his "design" was built are in danger of destruction. Then comes the lull in the action, and the typical war scene is included as well as an introspective, humanizing view of the antagonist, Bon. But then Bon is killed, Sutpen sets out to restore his lands (his house, unlike most others in that section of the country, has not been damaged by the Yankees), and it seems probable that he will marry his sister-in-law. This fails, and the land begins to be confiscated as a result of debt. But there is one final and rather pronounced hope for Sutpen in the pregnancy of Milly Jones. This is the encouraging scene before the catastrophe.

Though the ingredients of tragedy are present, Sullivan feels that the full tragic effect of Sutpen's story is marred by the arrangement of materials that Faulkner chose, that the novel "probably does not effect
a full-scale 'purification' of pity and fear. Most readers will agree that relief is not the action produced by the novel; many will say that what is felt is a burden, a weight, even as Quentin is bowed down with the load of the past. The structure required for creating a burden is necessarily different from the structure required for Aristotelian tragedy.

Some writers have looked for myth and tragedy in *Absalom, Absalom!* Others have ferreted out structural qualities of other genres, often contradicting each other in their efforts to classify this novel. Edgar Whan, Max Putzel, Millgate, and Irving Howe are among those who find Gothic elements, Whan saying that Faulkner emphasizes horror rather than terror so that the novel is Gothic, not tragic. His view is an exception to the general view that the novel has a tragic dimension. He raises the level of accomplishment of Faulkner over other Gothic writers by saying that the Gothic elements are so constructed as to be symbolic rather than sensational. Putzel also recognizes the symbolic: "symbolic pattern is more important than the literal or the chronological and impregnates the structure." He sees Gothic qualities in the association of Sutpen with horses, in allusions to Gothic names and to medieval chivalry, and in the make-believe of some of the women characters. However, the horror in the novel is not make-believe but real, and therein lies the basis for Putzel's conclusion that the novel

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61 "The Tragic Design of Absalom, Absalom!" South Atlantic Quarterly, 50 (October 1959), 560-566.

is finally not Gothic. Millgate sees the Gothic elements in *Absalom, Absalom!* as connecting Faulkner with the major writers of romance in both the American and European tradition. The Gothic characteristics that he mentions are the iron-willed man determined to achieve his design at the expense of humane treatment of his fellows, a mysterious first wife who troubles his design, an unsophisticated girl subjected to an improper offer, a "great house with a secret inmate and a mysterious guardian," a house which is destroyed by fire set by the guardian who herself dies in the blaze. Howe lists other Gothic devices used and gives reasons for their presence. There is "heavy chiaroscuro" in Rosa's narration; there is "frenzy, symbolism, and melodrama" in Rosa and sometimes in Quentin. There is a "fearful doomed mansion" in a "shadowy miasmic region" built by a "driven and demonic hero," trailed by "melancholy victims." These Gothic devices are used because Faulkner at the time of writing "conceived of the native past only in terms of excess and extravagance, as a hallucinatory spectacle, either more or less than human, but seldom merely human" and because he saw the past as a pageant brought alive by passion and viewed with amazement. The Gothic devices helped to put distance between the feelings of passion and amazement; they gave the reader a rest from intensity. The Gothic "involves an inversion of accepted values and modes of conduct," and its use makes the Sutpen story a negation of romantic Southern legend.


64 Achievement, pp. 162-163.
an inversion of traditional values. Again, the opinion of the critic is that the vision behind the work determines the structure of the work: exaggeration and hallucination find expression in the form of the novel.

Another interesting view as to the structural principles of the novel comes from James H. Justus. In a perceptive essay, he offers support for the proposition that the novel is an epic. He defines epic as a narrative fiction, whether in prose or verse, that excludes cut pieces of drama and contains characters of high position engaged in a series of adventures, organic narrative revolving about a central figure of heroic proportions, action important to a nation or a race at a specific point in its development, and a style that is dignified, majestic, and elevated. He feels that Absalom, Absalom! fills these demands. In addition, the story has "the ritual of the story-teller and his audience," the overall frame being Quentin's telling the story to Shreve, with subnarrations—those of Rosa to Quentin, Compson to Quentin, Sutpen to General Compson—being cycles of the tale. Further, two epic themes pervade the novel: the ruined homeland and the anatomy of love. The absence of love in Sutpen, love disguised as duty, commitment, and honor in Henry, and the dangers of love as seen in the Judith-Henry-Bon relationship are examined. And finally, the novel has the choric quality of the epic, the expression of the feelings of a large group of people living in or near the writer's own

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time, as required by Tillyard's definition of epic. Justus expresses the epic framework of the novel in this statement: "The fall of the House of Sutpen is accompanied by a fully conscious analysis of the evil effects of that family on its own members and on the immediate community, on the South, and by extension on the nation and the world at large." 66

A more ingenious attempt to explain the structure of the novel according to already established principles is made by Marvin K. Singleton. It is his opinion that the frame of the novel "corresponds to a hearing on a Bill in Chancery before Quentin and Shreve as 'Chancery Masters.'" A summons is sent by Rosa to Quentin, who is to be the judge. She "pleads," "claims," "holds no brief"; she pleads Equity because the law cannot give her Justice. She has no grounds for civil action in a court; her insult must be rectified by Equity. 67 In supporting his thesis, Singleton reminds the reader that much of the language of the novel has legalistic foundation, and he shows how the conflict of the novel is between the Common Law values of Sutpen and the more equitable values of Rosa. 68


67 A definition for "Equity" is cited by Singleton: "invoked in English courts to purge the conscience of the defendant, especially where the defendant's misdeeds threatened women and other helpless persons," from J. Pomeroy, Treatise on Equity, 1941, p. 360.

D. L. Minter labels the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!* by means of a formula he devised to describe a body of novels: "the interpreted design," that is, "works structured by juxtaposition of two characters, one a man of design or designed action . . ., the other a man of interpretation . . ., through whose interpreting mind and voice the story of the man of design comes to us." In his judgment Faulkner's novel represents the apotheosis of this form, a pattern which he also ascribes to such works as Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* and Melville's *Moby Dick*. In this type of novel, a man of interpretation is baffled by the failure of a man of design and tries to make the failure coherent. Since modern man, says Minter, places his faith in order and design, any failure of such threatens him. The interpreters in *Absalom, Absalom!* fail in their attempts to find reason in the saga of Sutpen. They "speak with the authority of failure." Their failure to achieve coherence is most emphatically underscored by the structure of the novel. The reader, too, searches in vain for orderly progression of events, for definite and conclusive evidence on which to base his interpretations.

While the critics mentioned above view the organization of the novel from the standpoint of its similarities to other literary works, other critics look at the parts that go to make up this particular work, its natural divisions, such divisions as first half and second half, frame story and internal story, central episode and supporting

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episodes. A. Atkins believes the novel has "matched halves," the first half dominated by Rosa in the September heat of Mississippi, the second half dominated by Quentin in the December cold of Massachusetts. One of the ways Barbara Ewell views the novel is similar. There are two sections held together by Quentin in the way that two pools are held together by a "water cord." Thomas Lorch also breaks the novel in two, but for a different purpose. In the first part of the novel, Sutpen and the "male principle" are dominant; Sutpen creates out of earth and women and lives among men. In the second part the forces of the "female principle" defeat him. The male principle is creative; the female principle is "the passive but sustaining and indomitable life forces of nature." It "absorbs man's aspirations and ideals just as it absorbs him and his seed." In the second part the emphasis shifts to the women that Sutpen lives among. Judith, Clytie, and Rosa do not need him while he is away at war. Bualalia Bon sets into motion the force that destroys him; and Milly Jones bears him a daughter. Lorch concludes that man must bring form and order into life, but in amassing material--property and family--he acquires a load which eventually brings him down. Like the earth, the female principle sustains but eventually destroys.


71 "To Move in Time," p. 1940A.

John Hagan points out that the structure may be defined "on the basis of the narrative frame," that is, the storytellers speculating about an old story, or it may be defined on the basis of the Sutpen story itself. Thus, he also indicates a two-fold structure; only his is outer and inner, not first and second. His emphasis, though, is on the structure of the Sutpen story, which he divides into three parts; the first, Chapters I through VI, details the rise and fall of Sutpen and presents the "tragic effects of his grandiose design." The second division includes Chapters VII and VIII in which are given the "three principal causes of those effects": Sutpen's rejection and his formulation of a plan, Sutpen's first son, and the race of that son. The third division is Chapter IX, in which is revealed the source of the knowledge about Bon and in which the final tragedy of the family, the burning of the house, is dramatized, having already occurred between Chapters V and VI. Hagan's conclusion is that the story is structured as a movement from effect to cause. It is a conclusion already reached by others, including Lind: "Effect-cause sequence is worked into all the action and characterization." She also speaks in terms of the frame story, calling it a "macabre search" to find out who or what is hidden at Sutpen's Hundred.

The focal point around which the novel is structured is not always seen as the same by critics. William Poirier supports the view that

73 "Déjà vu and the Effect of Timeliness," pp. 32-33.
Quentin as organizer of Sutpen's story is the "dramatic center" of the novel. Olga Vickery, on the other hand, believes Thomas Sutpen to be the "dynamic center," surrounded by a "kaleidoscope of views." The structure has a core of facts surrounded by various interpretations. M. E. Bradford strikes a balance by saying Quentin's intelligence is as much a part of the structure as "Sutpen's story since it controls the reader's perspective." He adds that the Sutpen story is made the "formative influence on Quentin's life" by the structure of the novel. "He [Quentin] is measured and defined as one of the unenduring by his synthesis, extrapolation, and abortive flight from these narratives. Out of his dialectic with them the novel moves forward." The focus of the Sutpen story for Quentin is Henry's action in the death of Bon; it is an event also focused upon by Rosa, Compson, and Shreve. This focus is also discussed by Lind. She points out that all the narrators are troubled by Sutpen's forbidding the marriage of Bon and Judith. If they could have known the reason, they would then know why Henry murdered Bon. This knowledge is "held for the very close of the legend," and when revealed "casts into sudden order all the hitherto unaligned clues in the versions of the various narrators." The focus on the murder of Bon leads the reader to a central thematic concern—the problem of race for the South.

76The Novels, pp. 84-85.
Whereas Bradford and others see Bon's death as the central episode, Frank Baldanza says the novel is "organized around a series of confrontations at doorways or gates," the murder of Bon being only one of these confrontations. He lists the Virginia plantation door, the Jefferson church door, Wash at Rosa's door, Rosa and Clytie at the foot of the stairs at Sutpen's Hundred, and Sutpen at Wash's front door. These events he calls "theme clusters," theme being a musical term as he uses it, and points to them as the pattern for the structure of the novel.79 Similarly, Millgate looks at the structure of the book as being organized about a number of crucial moments of recognition, truth, disillusion: Henry and his father in the library, Henry shooting Bon, Sutpen proposing to Rosa, Wash Jones murdering Sutpen--each moment presented in a kind of tableau arrested at a particular point of time and held in suspension while it is looked at, approached from all sides, inspected as if it were itself an artifact, .... Each moment is evoked again and again, and at each recurrence we seem to learn a little more about it and even to be moving towards a final clarification. Again and again, however, Faulkner stops us short of elucidation, constantly reinforcing in this way a suspense which, throughout the book, is created not so much by the withholding of narrative facts ... as by the continual frustration of our desire to complete the pattern of motivation, of cause and effect. The movement of the book becomes almost wave-like--surging forward, falling back, and then surging forward again--and it is notable that most of the chapters, including the last, end on such moments of checked resolution.80

These two critics point the right direction for a discussion of the structure of _Absalom, Absalom!_ They recognize that the basis of

79 "The Structure of _Light in August,_" _Modern Fiction Studies_, 13 (Spring 1967), 68.

80 _Achievement_, p. 164.
structure is not story pattern in the traditional sense of the word, but artistic pattern--theme clusters or a series of tableaux. Such words as "confrontation," "recognition," "disillusion," "frustration," "motivation," indicate the critics’ awareness of the effect of psychology on the form of the novel. Emotion prevails over logic; the natural prevails over the orderly techniques of tradition. Any investigation of the structure of this novel must resist the tendency to make conclusions based on the life in time of Thomas Sutpen and Quentin Compson.

The structuring principles that are characteristic of Faulkner are perhaps developed to their fullest potential in this novel. His blocks of material do not always come in such obvious ways as chapter divisions or stories, but rather come suddenly, sometimes by a change in typography or spacing, sometimes with no warning at all. The concurrent centrifugal and centripetal movement covers both time and space. The past is the center and the circumference of the present; and the present, in that it was Sutpen’s future, is the axis and boundary of the past. Mississippi is both stage and the audience for the action, both cause and effect of events. The placing of blocks in artistic patterns and the turning of the gyre for emotional effect are skillfully done. The qualities of modern structure are masterfully exemplified, and traditional patterns are blended for modern effect. The demands of the particular vision of Absalom, Absalom!, as well as the author’s general practices, the nature of his era, and the examples of literary tradition, influence the structure of this novel.
The structure of Absalom, Absalom! is traditional in one very elemental way. The unit of division of material is the chapter. It is my purpose in the examination of the novel's structure to look first and most closely at the chapters. Most students of this novel have divided it according to points of view. Perhaps the reason is that point of view was Faulkner's basis of division in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying. However, Faulkner did not arbitrarily divide this novel into points of view as he did the two earlier novels, and I think some misunderstanding of his purpose occurs when the critic imposes such divisions. The points of view are so intermingled, so often confused, and in some cases so similar in style and content, that there is at least as plausible an argument for a single point of view as there is for multiple voices. The first chapter, which is usually considered one of Rosa's chapters, actually has three voices: an omniscient narrator close to Quentin, Quentin's italicized thoughts, and Rosa. The conventional critical comment, that Rosa's description of Sutpen is characterized by images of demons, needs also to be qualified. A close reading of the chapter reveals that it is in Quentin's thoughts that these images first occur and that he characterizes Sutpen in this way more often than Rosa does. The table
that follows illustrates.

**TABLE I**

CHARACTERIZATIONS OF SUTPEN IN CHAPTER I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Characterization</th>
<th>Attributed to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>&quot;(man-horse-demon)&quot;</td>
<td>Narrator close to Quentin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>&quot;this demon ... came out of nowhere&quot;</td>
<td>Quentin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>&quot;only through ... could He stay this demon&quot;</td>
<td>Quentin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>&quot;enclosed by its effluvium of hell&quot;</td>
<td>Narrator close to Quentin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>&quot;ogre-shape&quot;</td>
<td>Narrator close to Quentin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>&quot;fiend, blackguard and devil&quot;</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>&quot;that man ... the evil's source and head&quot;</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>&quot;villain dyed&quot;</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>&quot;no scruples&quot;</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>&quot;ogre or djinn&quot;</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second, third, and fourth chapters are traditionally thought of as being the voice of Jason Compson, though here, too, the omniscient narrator close to Quentin plays a role, carrying the reader through one third of Chapter II, introducing Chapters III and IV, and narrating a portion of the last part of Chapter IV, into which is introduced Bon's letter. This same narrator concludes Chapter V, the one usually spoken of as Rosa's chapter, and makes comments from time to time in
the remaining four chapters which are conventionally ascribed to the points of view of Quentin and Shreve. This complex intermingling of voices makes point of view a less manageable division of material than chapters.

Further, since they are not chronological and sequential steps in a logical progression but rather blocks of material, each with its own focus and form, each emotionally and artistically related to the others, the chapters offer insight into a typical structural technique of Faulkner's: juxtaposition. Also, a study of the chapters reveals an example of Faulkner's own statement about his work to the effect that he was telling the same story over and over, trying each time to go a little further, to add something new. By telling the story a different way in each chapter, each time from a different angle or with a different focus, he explores all the ramifications of his material. A final justification for examining the individual chapters is the most obvious: they are more manageable than the whole of a very complex work.

Absalom, Absalom! has nine chapters, some of which follow conventional structural devices, but most of which employ modern techniques. The chapters vary in form from a tightly organized recapitulation of Sutpen's first years in Jefferson in the second chapter to a rambling and imaginative revery in the sixth chapter. Some considerations in examining the chapters are the number and kinds of revisions and their effect on structure; the divisions within the chapters and their order and arrangement; the principal organizing device in each chapter,
i.e., logic or emotion, sequence or cumulation, episodic or climactic
development; the world created by the chapter; and the place of the
chapter in the structure of the novel.

The chapters themselves fall into two groups—the Mississippi
chapters and the Massachusetts chapters. In the first group, Chapters
I through V, the story of Sutpen and his second family is primary. It
is her sister's family that Rosa naturally introduces to Quentin, and
it is the events in the lives of the members of that family that she
is concerned with. This family and their role in the life of Jefferson
also concern Quentin's father. Both he and Rosa bring Bon into their
stories as being a cause for some strange behavior on the part of Ellen
and Sutpen and Henry, but the primary focus is on the second family as
it is recalled in words and deeds. The second group of chapters, VI
through IX, is more concerned with Sutpen's first family: first the
grandson, Charles Etienne St. Valery Bon; then Sutpen himself; next
the son Charles Bon; and finally, the great grandson, Jim Bond. The
children of the second marriage continue to be a part of the story but
only in their relationship to the Bons. Sutpen, of course, has two
other families: Clytie is his daughter by a slave woman, and an unnamed
daughter was born to him by Milly Jones. The slave child is introduced
in the Mississippi chapters and is associated with the second family,
Clytie being very much a part of life at Sutpen's Hundred and apparently
well regarded by Sutpen himself, certainly provided for by him. Milly's
child is introduced in the Massachusetts chapters, and the sordid
circumstances of her birth are associated with the Haitian family,
reinforcing the dishonorable actions of Sutpen toward his first wife. Rosa and Compson explore in their stories the respectable means of begetting progeny in the Southern past, while Quentin and Shreve uncover the disreputable male-female relationships of that same society. In both cases there are a white-white union and a white-black union, a legal union and a nonlegal union. The nonlegal unions occur in the sub-structure of the novel and serve to illustrate the inhumanities arising from inequities in racial and economic systems that place white above black and powerful above powerless. The legal unions occur in the main structure of the novel and serve to reveal that the basic inhumanity is racial rather than economic: a rich white man can marry a poor white woman (Sutpen and Ellen), or a poor white man can marry a rich, presumably white woman (Sutpen and Eulalia); but a white cannot marry a black, rich or poor (Sutpen putting away Eulalia and refusing to allow the marriage of Judith and Bon).

In the Mississippi chapters, the topic of race remains just beneath the surface. Rosa's disparaging remarks about Clytie, Compson's dispassionate probing of the morganatic marriage of Bon and the octoroon, and Quentin's aversion to hearing the story of Sutpen reveal on the one hand an insensitivity to the question of race and on the other hand a fear of the potentially explosive subject. But once Rosa is forced to deal with the subject in her confrontation with Clytie in Chapter V, it is as if the flood gates had been opened: the Massachusetts chapters moil and writhe with racial questions and racial images. It is race that separates Charles Etienne Bon from his aunts Judith and
Clytie; it is race that motivates Sutpen; it is race that kills Charles Bon; it is race that inspires Shreve's prophecy for the future. The undercurrents of racism that trouble the narratives of the opening chapters gather momentum and become the torrential flood that submerges Sutpen, and ultimately Quentin, in its dark and swirling waters.

Analysis of Chapter I:

The Structural Foundation: A Quest

The first chapter, with its overtones of myth and the hint of a quest, is thoroughly modern in structure. The discontinuity of time and space and style gives the material a psychological flavor enhanced by the imaginative quality of the mind of Quentin Compson and the repetitive nature of the style of Rosa Coldfield. A study of the various structural considerations in the chapter reveals that in terms of revision, Faulkner moved away from the realistic toward the poetic, away from the concrete toward the abstract. In terms of divisions of material, he used a tripartite structure, each part having its own rationale and the whole moving the reader into the very crux of the novel. The principal organizing device is psychological, and the world created by the structure of the chapter is one of superficial values and avoided responsibility.

In this chapter, Quentin, sitting in the "office" of Miss Rosa, observes the qualities of both the room and its owner, envisions the ghost of Thomas Sutpen, and constructs Sutpen's story in mythical, psychological, and sociological fashion while he listens to Rosa
explain why she sent for him. In a flash forward in time he discus-
sses the reason with his father; then back in Rosa’s parlor, he
envisions a portrait of the Sutpen family while he listens to Rosa
tell how Sutpen gained respectability, how her father helped him, and
how she watched him all her life, saw her sister’s marriage to him
marred by violence and tragedy, and yet agreed to marry him. She
wonders why her father, a man very different in outlook from Sutpen,
could relinquish his daughter and her sister to a man whose values
were so totally alien to his. As Quentin’s visions turn to Rosa
as a child and as his sense of time becomes numb, Rosa launches into
a story of Sutpen’s taste for speed and danger, as evidenced by his
Sunday-morning carriage races. She reveals that Sutpen’s daughter
Judith so shared his attitude that when deprived of the Sunday thrill,
she became ill. Rosa remembers that she and her father paid the
Sutpens a visit at the time of Judith’s illness, but that she was
sent out of the room while her father and sister Ellen discussed the
situation. Then she repeats an account of an episode of six years
later when Ellen, hearing screams in the barn, hurried there to
discover her son Henry vomiting at the sight of gouging and panting
men, one of whom was his own father, bloody from brutal fighting with
one of his slaves. Ellen’s dismay is heightened by the sight of Judith
and her slave sister Clytie looking on at the fight from the barn loft.

The revisions Faulkner or his editors made in this chapter indicate
that he decided against a "realistic" emotional outpouring using
stream-of-consciousness for Rosa and decided instead on a poetically ordered speech with the effect of an emotional outburst. To further enhance the poetic quality of the material, he sharpened the sensual appeal by repeating images already present in the manuscript. Revisions of diction lend an ambiguous and illusory quality to what had been more specific and concrete in the manuscript; consequently, changes in the direction of myth and symbolism are evident.

In the manuscript, when Rosa tells Quentin that she is not excusing herself for agreeing to marry Sutpen because she had had all her life to know what kind of man he was, she does so in a rambling fashion. She includes comments on Quentin's grandfather, on Sutpen's joining the war, on her own childhood relationship to Henry and Judith, and on her father's business transaction with Sutpen. In the published version, this material is not only left out, but the remaining material is more concise, less gossipy, and in some cases, more abstract. Though the passage in manuscript contains parallel sentence structure, the parallelism is ineffective because it is lost in the rambling discourse. In revision the parallelism controls the passage, creating a rhythm,

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1 MS, pp. 5-6. References in this paper to the manuscript are to Langford's transcription.

2 Absalom, p. 18.
which, in turn, creates emotion. The revision has the effect of an emotional self-condemnation without the disorder inherent in a "realistic" self-judgment.\(^3\)

Poetic ordering occurs in the handling of images in revision. In the very first passage of the novel—the description of Rosa, her house, and her preoccupation—images are repeated: "twice-bloomed wisteria [sic]," dust, sparrows, Rosa's child-likeness, a too-tall chair. Since additional references to dust and wisteria were made in revision, it can be concluded that the repetition was deliberate and must have been used for poetic and emotional effect. In revision, "dust" is placed before "motes" in the ninth line. In the finished version of the scene, there are "dust motes" in the slashes of light let in by the closed blinds; there are the dry dusty sounds of the sparrows outside the window; and there is the "biding and dreamy and victorious dust" out of which Sutpen appears. The first two images are sensuous, the third abstract. The linking of the three combines both concrete and universal levels of meaning.

\(^3\)The tightening up of the passage was apparently difficult. J. A. Winn reports that the edited typescript, an intermediate step between manuscript and book, represents a third version of the same passage. In the typescript as in the manuscript, Faulkner tried to build parallelism around the word "steps"—the steps in the destruction of the family. Winn finds, as I do, that the parallelism using the synonym for "watch" is more effective. "Faulkner's Revisions: A Stylist at Work," American Literature, 40 (1969), 231-238. As a result of watching Sutpen all her life, Rosa reports the catastrophic events in the lives of the Sutpens in seven clauses beginning with "I saw."

\(^4\)MS, p. 1, Absalom, p. 7.
The first wisteria image was originally strictly descriptive: "There was a wisteria [sic] vine on a wooden trellis before one window . . . ." The addition of "blooming for the second time that summer" to the manuscript introduces the idea of time repeating itself and reinforces the second mention of "twice-bloomed wisteria" by adding to its literal meaning of repetition of time the reader's experience of repetition of images. In addition, the second image is olfactory: the "sweet and oversweet" odor of the blooms fills the room. The permeation of the passage with the repeated images corresponds to the diffusion of the fragrance of the wisteria in the room. As the novel moves on, the wisteria's odor appears in several places and times, on Quentin's front porch in the twilight of that same day, in Quentin's Harvard room by way of the letter announcing Rosa's death, and in Rosa's summer at Sutpen's Hundred. In this one image, time and place coalesce.

The twice-bloomed wisteria not only describes the scene, not only affects the reader's sense of time, but also affects his sense of character. The image is associated with Rosa in this passage as it is in others. It indirectly reinforces the events in her life. The reader is about to witness her second self-initiated journey to Sutpen's Hundred, her own second blooming or second deliberate involvement with her kinspeople. The image also indirectly reveals her as not so much a physical being as a distillation or essence.

5MS, p. 1. 6Absalom, p. 8.
Sutpen, too, becomes in revision not so much a man as a force. The folksy details about him are eliminated in revision and replaced by indirection and abstraction. In the manuscript he borrows money in one instance and joins the regiment in another; in the novel these events are omitted, and he is only indirectly associated with other events: the manuscript passage, "he forbade the marriage of his daughter," becomes "I [Rosa] saw Judith's marriage forbidden without rhyme or reason or shadow of excuse." In the manuscript, a man is being watched in action; in the novel, he becomes a force of destruction for those around him and is described in an added passage as "the evil's source and head which had outlasted all its victims."

Both the elimination of rambling and the tendency toward abstraction can be further illustrated. Other than Rosa's rambling monologue of self-condemnation, there is in the manuscript a disordered diatribe on the early years of Sutpen's life in Jefferson. This passage is completely eliminated from Chapter I, and as Langford notes, becomes the basis for Chapter II. The material is expressed by Rosa in the manuscript in harsh, judging terms; she speaks of the "crass stupidity of the town," the "poor harried frightened little architect," the mob in town "like so many dogs following a hen" and like "blackguards and hooligans." In Chapter II this same portion of Sutpen's life is related by Quentin's father in calmer tones, though the judgments remain, indirectly revealed.

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7MS, p. 6, Absalom, p. 18. 8Ibid. 9Collation, p. 18. 10MS, p. 9.
Both Langford and J. A. Winn illustrate the tendency toward abstraction and indirection. Langford points out the change from "dead man" to "long dead object," a reference to Sutpen in the very first passage. He credits the change with "deepening the texture of the statement by fusing the dead man with the effect he has on Rosa."  

Winn notes the change from "last known member" to "last member," in reference to the four Sutpens in the imagined family portrait. He believes the deletion adds mystery.

Another change in the direction of abstraction occurs. As Quentin waits to hear Rosa's story, he becomes aware of a second materialization of Sutpen. In the manuscript it is the "invoked ghost of the brother-in-law"; in the novel it is the "invoked ghost of the man whom she could neither forgive nor revenge herself upon." Again the emphasis has been shifted from a man with normal relationships--"brother-in-law"--to a force or power out of the reach of mortals, yet a cause of mortal

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12 "Faulkner's Revisions," p. 237. In my opinion, Faulkner was more mysterious in the phrase "last known member," since the whereabouts of some member of the family remains ambiguous. The phrase "last member" is unequivocal; there is no missing member. The mystery is why Faulkner deliberately concealed knowledge of Henry's whereabouts, why he removed a clue to the eventual outcome of Quentin's visit to Sutpen's Hundred. The answer seems to be that "last member" is more in keeping with Quentin's knowledge, and Quentin is the source of information at this point in the novel.

13 MS, p. 3, Absalom, p. 13.
These revisions move the chapter in the direction of the symbolic: Sutpen takes on a larger role than that of unreasonable father or hated brother-in-law.

One further illustration will suffice for the several instances of movement from concrete to abstract through the elevation of both diction and syntax. In the following revision, the colloquialism "her and him" becomes the more formal "himself and her," and the clipped sentence is made more eloquent by the addition of the poetic dimensions of repetition and allusion.

Publishing work, p. 13

about her and him. about himself and her, about that engagement which did not engage, that troth which failed to plight.

The Hebraic reiteration of the same idea in different words and the allusion to the past through the use of the archaic "troth" and "plight" have the effect of taking the sentence out of the local and concrete world of the colloquial expression and into the universal world of formal and poetic expression.

The movement in revision is from the folksy and concrete to the poetic and abstract. The movement in the chapter itself is from a shadowy present to a sharply outlined past, from the imaginative and speculative activities of the mind to the physical activities of the flesh. The chapter may be seen as tripartite, the first section having to do with reasons for the story, the second with Rosa's speculation and analysis of the moral situation behind the story, and the third with specific illustrations of the moral influence of Sutpen.
on his children. Rosa explains that she is telling the story so that
Quentin may use it for his own benefit when he becomes a man of letters.
Quentin believes, however, that she is revealing the story in order to
explain the reason the South lost the war, though he is puzzled that
she does not write it herself instead of suggesting that he write it.
Quentin's father believes the story is being told because the present
generation, specifically Quentin, is as responsible for the events in
the story as those people who were actually present for the events.
Thus, the way is prepared for a story with three dimensions: entertain-
ment, explanation, and involvement. In these dimensions may be
found the basis for the structure of the novel; for example, the
entertaining story needs the structural devices of mystery and suspense
and climactic development; the explanation must probe cause and effect
in a logical development; the story of man's responsibility is a more
universal story and is supported by a mythical structure, an inclusive
point of view, image cumulation, and other psychological structural
devices that create reader involvement.

The first section sets guidelines for the structure of the novel,
and it also indicates which of the techniques will be predominant. It
has much in common with those novels in which spatial rather than
sequential development is followed. Description melts into narrative,
which merges into stream-of-consciousness followed by dialogue;
narrative interspersed with stream-of-consciousness is followed by
an abrupt flash forward in time, which is followed by an imaginative
description of a Sutpen family portrait, then an analysis of Rosa. Not only do types of discourse merge and collide, but each narrative section takes a different emphasis; there is myth; then psychological analysis; then history. As the ghost of Sutpen first materializes in Quentin's mind, Quentin recreates in mythical fashion some events in Sutpen's life, emphasizing the creation of Sutpen's Hundred. As Quentin becomes two selves, one self recreates the story using stream-of-consciousness technique, emphasizing the destructive nature of Sutpen. As Quentin thinks in terms of his heritage, he tells of Sutpen's life as a bit of history complete with dates and placenames. These three accounts follow a sequential development within themselves, but the cumulation of the three gives a spatial effect. The mythical, psychological, and historical accounts coalesce as the ghost of Sutpen once more materializes in Quentin's mind, accompanied by his (Sutpen's) family in a portrait. This image is spatial in two ways: a picture is inherently spatial, and the image is a cumulation of the three previous accounts. The alternation and merging of types of discourse, the coalescing of images, the mythic parallel, the sudden transitions—these traits of structure are characteristic of the novel as a whole.

Structural traits of the novel, especially its syntax, are, according to James Justus, foreshadowed in the very first sentence.

14 Robert Knox calls the first two recreations of Sutpen's life "fable" and the third account "history." It is his contention that the "structure [of the novel] produces gradual understanding of the moral significance of" the facts given in these brief accounts. "William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!" unpublished dissertation, Harvard, 1959, pp. 93, 96.
This sentence sets the mood and attitude toward the Sutpen legend and suggests a "compulsion for the furious rushing of the narration that dominates the later chapters." Its syntax allows "alteration and overlapping of time," "delayed modification," "suspension of description for including peripheral material or meanings," the introduction of "lumping" rather than sequential development, and impressionistic as well as objectified material. Justus also believes that the first chapter itself has the structural effect of initiating the Sutpen legend "in medias res."\(^{15}\)

One other important structural consideration in section one of the chapter is the introduction of a quest, a quest that was made more specific in revision than it was in manuscript. The trip to Sutpen's Hundred that is Rosa's ultimate reason for asking Quentin over is not mentioned in the first draft. That Rosa has an ulterior motive is suggested: "It would be three hours yet before he would learn why she had sent for him . . . ."\(^ {16}\) That the motive is a trip is hinted at in the words of Quentin's father: "no matter what happens out there."\(^ {17}\) But narrative details added in the final version pinpoint the ultimate result of Quentin's being called in: a buggy trip "out there tonight."\(^ {18}\) Langford believes the added references to the "nocturnal mission" heighten suspense.\(^ {19}\) The reader would probably have been more mystified

\(^{15}\) "Epic Design," pp. 171-172.  
\(^{16}\) MS, p. 3, Absalom, p. 11.  
\(^{17}\) MS, p. 3, Absalom, p. 13.  
\(^{18}\) MS, p. 3, Absalom, pp. 12, 13.  
\(^{19}\) Collation, p. 14.
by the manuscript version with its absence of details; nevertheless, the hint of a quest does create excitement, and not only does the quest serve as a frame for an entertaining story, it also corresponds to the more universal quest suggested by the search for reasons for the story, thereby taking on both literal and symbolic dimensions.

The first section lays a groundwork for the structure of the novel; the second section suggests the nature of the world to be created by the structure. It is a world in which the quest is taken on unwillingly or avoided altogether. Rosa, puzzling over what she believes to be Sutpen's unnatural influence over her family, reveals a world in which respectability is given to the aggressive though otherwise undeserving, where blame is placed on God and not on man, men choosing to believe that God turned away rather than that men created a society susceptible to collapse, a world where women are given the task of upholding and preserving community values even though they are, more often than not, protected and prevented from knowing the full extent of community life, where men who fight for the preservation of the community are given honor no matter how ruthless they are. Rosa in her probing is guilty of refusing responsibility for the condition of her society because she blames her fate on a curse on her house. She admits respecting Sutpen for his part in the war, and she notes that she was charged with looking after Judith when Ellen died, though she was in no position to provide either physical or spiritual nurture for her niece. The willingness with which her society degraded such concepts as respectability and honor, their unwillingness to shoulder responsibility for their social problems, and the naiveté of women in matters
of moral standards applied by their men suggests a people unwilling to look below the surface, a society in which appearances were more important than substance. Significantly, the novel has a pattern of images that supports the theme of appearance without substance, three of these images—faces, echoes, and wisteria fragrance—having already occurred in the first section.

The second section is primarily analytic, with repetition and parallelism playing major roles in its grammatical and poetical structure. Rosa first analyzes Sutpen, repeating, "he was not a gentleman." Then she analyzes herself, using the refrain, "I hold no brief for myself." Finally she analyzes her father, reiterating her perplexity over his actions with the clause "that it should have been our father." In the first analysis "blind romantic fool who . . ." is repeated. Through the second passage runs the aforementioned "I saw . . ." construction as well as an "I don't plead . . ." construction. In the third analysis an interrogative sentence structure is repeated; clauses beginning with "how" and "what" underscore Rosa's puzzlement at the behavior of her father. The repeated phrases and parallel syntactical structures effectively create for the reader the sense of having heard it all before. They also characterize Rosa as a single-minded woman saying the same thing over and over.

In the transition from the analytic passages of the second section to the narrative passages of the third, the reader is returned to the reactions of Quentin to his situation. He silently envisions Rosa as a child, whereupon she speaks of her childhood for a moment, using the same reiterative pattern. In this transitional passage, similarities
between Quentin and Rosa may be observed. Their thoughts and Rosa's words turn at the same time to her childhood. Rosa's world, like Quentin's, was full of voices and faces, not of her own direct experience but nevertheless of great significance to her. And Rosa turned to Quentin as Ellen had turned to her for help. Again the sense of time repeating itself is felt. Quentin expresses it as "elapsed and yet-elapsing time." 20

In the third part of Chapter I, Rosa tells her two stories, her style remaining the same, her repeated phrase being "from themselves." The parallelism comes not only in syntax but also in content, both stories revealing responses of Sutpen's children to his style of life. This section, following as it does Quentin's questions as to why the story has to be told and Rosa's questions as to the meaning of the life of Sutpen, ostensibly illustrates Rosa's contention that Sutpen had some supernatural influence that doomed all who associated themselves with him. Indirectly, however, the two episodes reveal the answers to Rosa's and Quentin's questions: Sutpen's story is a racial story; it is in terms of his relationship to the black man that his story has meaning, and it is in terms of his responsibility for this relationship that his story needs to be told. The images of brutal fighting and bleeding and the comparison of the slave handing Sutpen his coat to a man prodding a snake with a stick dramatize the relationship in stark, physical terms. The degradation of the spirit and the dehumanization of relationships between men that figure prominently in other

20Absalom, p. 22.
chapters are here concretely pictured. Conversely, the humane qualities that unite men in common purpose and brotherhood, a unity suggested by the images of identical faces on both the Sutpen family and its slaves, have no concretion, since faces, being only outward appearances, have no substance. The evidence of separation and the hope of union are the eventual fruits of the quest upon which Quentin and Rosa have embarked, but in their unwillingness to accept responsibility, as evidenced by Quentin's being an uneasy auditor and Rosa's being an unequivocal fault-finder, they fail to see below the surface of Sutpen's corruptive influence on his children.

The question of responsibility is treated in both of the stories that Rosa tells. The Negro slave who drives Sutpen's carriage to church makes clear that the responsibility for his driving tactics lies with his white master: "Marster say, I do." The black man embodying and reinforcing principles established by the white overlord while remaining immune from responsibility for these same principles is symptomatic of the refusal to accept responsibility on the part of the same overlord. Sutpen himself, when accosted by Ellen for exposing Judith to the ugly scene in the barn, denied his responsibility: "I didn't bring Judith down here." Denial in this matter is a foreshadowing of Sutpen's larger denial in the matter of race. The refusal to admit responsibility for a society based on oppression is a characteristic that has been

\[21\text{Absalom, p. 25.} \quad 22\text{Ibid., p. 30.}\]
handed down from generation to generation with the result that a growing burden of guilt has made the society impotent, impotent not only because of the burden but because of the pretense that the burden is not there. The fervor with which the society clings to its traditions and longs for the return of the past is due in part to the belief that the burden was not present in the earlier time, that innocence prevailed. The generation of Quentin Compson has not yet been willing to recognize that to admit guilt and to assume responsibility for the condition of society are the only means of lifting the burden and becoming free again. This generation, like Quentin, is a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterward, from the fever which had cured the disease, waking from the fever without even knowing that it had been the fever itself which they had fought against and not the sickness, looking with stubborn recalcitrance backward beyond the fever and into the disease with actual regret, weak from the fever yet free of the disease and not even aware that the freedom was that of impotence.23

Quentin's discomfort in having to listen to Rosa talk about the past comes in part from the dawning realization that somewhere, sometime, someone has to accept responsibility for the tragic gulf between men that had one of its cruelest manifestations in the structure of Southern society.

The three parts of this chapter fit together in an artistic pattern. Though the chapter has a sequential element—Quentin goes in the afternoon to Rosa's and listens to her story—the event is not the basis of structure. The conjured ghost, the imaginatively created

23p. 12.
The black and white faces identical to each other are the images that hold the chapter together. The rhythm created by repetition and parallelism is also part of the structural glue. The particular images create a feeling of lack of substance, of superficiality, and the particular kind of repetition creates a sense of single-mindedness, a refusal to see things in any way but the traditional way. The discontinuity of time and discourse, suggesting as it does the confusion of an uncomfortable mind, and the sensuous appeal of images and rhythm create a structure more emotional than rational, more psychological than logical.

Analysis of Chapter II:

Remembrance of Things Past

The second chapter of Absalom, Absalom! is different from the first in two important ways: it is more conventionally plotted and it offers a different point of view. The mythical quality of the first chapter is continued, but the atmosphere created by setting and images contrasts sharply with that of Chapter I. Certain image patterns give the chapter spatial and poetic effects, but basically Chapter II is sequential. In spite of its chronological organization, the reader's interpretation of the chapter is based not on logic or reason but on emotion, an interpretation influenced by the structural technique of juxtaposition.

The chapter begins in the present on the front porch of the Compson family but is quickly moved to the past by an omniscient narrator close to the mind of Quentin, who, in Proustian fashion, associates the ringing
of the church bells in the present with the same bells ringing in the past. The narrator details the arrival of Sutpen in Jefferson on a June Sunday morning in 1833. He tells of Sutpen's emaciated appearance, his skill with pistols, his close-lipped behavior, his purchase of land, his disappearance, and his return two months later with a French architect and a wagon-load of slaves who are to become legendary. The narrator also describes the work of building Sutpen's Hundred and the parties of townsfolk who watch the process for two years and then are invited to the estate for hunting parties for the next three years, a time when Sutpen rests from his building. Finally, the narrator portrays the amazement of the townsfolk when Sutpen returns to Jefferson to approach Goodhue Coldfield with a business deal and an offer to marry Ellen Coldfield. At this point in the chapter, Mr. Compson picks up the narration, telling how Sutpen left town again, an event that troubled the natives so much that when he returned with four wagonloads of furnishings, they formed a vigilance committee to ride out to Sutpen's Hundred to see him. The committee was hesitant to accost him, however, and Sutpen was able to ride into town, change clothes at the Holston House, go to the Coldfields to propose marriage to Ellen, and emerge from the house an engaged man before the townsfolk felt strong enough to arrest him. He was promptly released on bond to Coldfield and Compson (Quentin's grandfather who is the source for Mr. Compson's narration), a quieter and healthier looking man than the Sutpen who had arrived in Jefferson five years before. The next portion of Mr. Compson's narration describes the events leading to the tearful wedding of Ellen to Sutpen.
Though Sutpen and Ellen and Ellen's aunt wanted a big wedding, the circumstances of Sutpen's recent arrest and the economic position of the Coldfields made a smaller wedding prudent. But the aunt insisted, the wedding becoming to her a matter of stamping Sutpen with respectability as well as a matter of sentiment. The town refused to give its stamp, and the aunt's hysterical attempt to coerce people into attending the wedding only worsened the situation. Sutpen's precaution of stationing slaves at the church door proved wise, since the wedding party was not only pained by walking into the empty church but also by being the target of missiles of garbage thrown by rabble from taverns and livery stables. The town did not sanction the wedding but soon began to enjoy again the hospitality of Sutpen's Hundred.

In the first chapter, as long as the reader followed Quentin and Rosa, he was subjected to shifts from present to past, from oral discourse to interior monologue; he had the feeling of hearing the same thing over and over, of participating in the emotional life of two rather disturbed persons, the two-selved Quentin and the childlike old lady. In Chapter II the shifting, the repetition, the emphasis on the personal are absent. The omniscient narrator and Jason Compson are more logical, more sympathetic in their treatment of Sutpen, and more conventional in their approach. Their account of Sutpen's first years in Jefferson moves in chronological order, and an interest in

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24 Instead of intentionally adding repetition as he did in the first chapter, Faulkner or his editors deleted several passages because they were included elsewhere. See MS, pp. 13-24.
sociological detail and community rather than personal life is evident. The omniscient narrator close to Quentin is no longer influenced by demon images but takes the same calm approach as Compson, who, as Volpe puts it, "clears the air of the hell-fire smoke" and presents Sutpen not as demon but as "tragic hero," "one of the powerful of the earth—courageous, strong, independent—who strides to success without faltering." Narrator Compson, heir to Sutpen's only real friend, General Compson, "brings to his narration," according to Lind, "a seeming repose and expansiveness which is a welcome counterbalance to Miss Rosa's blind subjectivity . . .; his elaboration gives the legend an apparent foundation in fact." The relaxed point of view is appropriate for the expression of Jefferson's omnipresent legend.

The mythic and legendary quality of the material is a trait carried over from the first chapter. The pattern of Sutpen's life in his first five years in Jefferson is a universal pattern. Sutpen and his slaves, indistinguishable from each other in the mud, share the abundance of

25 Most of the additions to the chapter seem to be for the purpose of making the narration distinctively Compson's. He picks up the narration one section earlier and the following additions to the section reveal Compson as a man with social and civic interests: (1) a long commentary on the attitude of the town toward a man who involves it with himself against its conscious will (MS, p. 18, Absalom, pp. 43-44), (2) a comparison of Sutpen to John L. Sullivan (MS, p. 19, Absalom, p. 46), and (3) a second comment on the town's "state of indigestion" (MS, p. 19, Absalom, p. 46).

the land and evoke the primeval, Edenic, but also brutal state of man. The mud-splattered Sutpen entering the Holston House to change into new clothes and emerging carrying a newspaper cornucopia of flowers suggests the entrance of man into civilization. The clods of dirt and the rotten vegetables thrown by the mob at the church indicate man's rejection by his fellows, even in the face of the knowledge that something larger than man accepts him. Sutpen, like societies, creates a world, interacts with other men for the purpose of furnishing that world, and attempts to perpetuate that world by marriage. His is the universal quest, the search for order out of chaos, the desire to retain order through acquiring the accouterments of civilization, the pursuit of immortality through descendants. The path of man moves from the elemental, natural world, to social and civil levels, then to sacramental or religious levels of life. In the course of this movement, he leaves the innocence of the garden behind, takes on the burden of civilization, suffers rejection by man, and attempts to find sanctuary among the "immolated stones." In refusing to be present at his wedding, the townspeople attempt to deny Sutpen sanctuary, a denial that Brooks explains thus:

The society into which Sutpen rides in 1833 is not a secularized society. That is not to say that the people are necessarily "good." They have their selfishness and cruelty and their snobbery, as men have always had them. Once Sutpen has acquired enough wealth and displayed enough force, the people of the community are willing to accept him. But they do not live by his code, nor do they share his innocent disregard of accepted values. Indeed, from the beginning they regard him with deep
suspicion and some consternation. These suspicions are gradually mollified; there is a kind of acceptance; but Sutpen remains outside the community.\textsuperscript{28}

The story of Sutpen's first five years in Jefferson is a pattern that will be repeated in Chapter VII—the departure from Eden only to be rejected by civilization. In both stories, the aristocracy, or the "good" people, reject Sutpen. In both stories, the servants and the rabble carry the message of rejection. Responsibility, in this case responsibility for carrying the message of rejection, becomes an issue in this chapter as it was in the first chapter.

The mythical quality of the material seems to have been sharpened by revision and is intensified by image patterns and poetic repetition. One addition to the manuscript adds to Sutpen's character something of the force elaborated on in revisions in Chapter I: Quentin's grandfather is reported as saying "Given the occasion and the need, this man can and will do anything."\textsuperscript{29} One deletion indicates a decision to be less specific about Sutpen's past and silent about his future, a deletion that by adding mystery removes the man Sutpen further from the realm of flesh and blood:

\textit{MS, p. 22} \hspace{1cm} \textit{Published work, p. 53}

learn and where because of this he was to make that mistake which if he had acquiesced to it would not have been even an error and which, since he refused to be stopped by it, became his doom—that unsleeping

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Yoknapatawpha Country}, p. 297. \textsuperscript{29} \textit{MS, p. 19, Absalom}, p. 46.
The images of dust and flitting faces that create a sense of superficiality and decay in the first chapter are replaced in this chapter by images of bells, of mud, of April, of tears and rain. The images of tears repeated throughout the story of Ellen's wedding unify this section of the chapter. Compson, for all his interest in sociological detail--customs in dress and architecture and social relationships--recreates this story imaginatively. He begins

Ellen seems to have entered the church that night out of weeping as though out of rain, gone through the ceremony and then walked back out of the church and into the weeping again, the tears again, the same tears even, the same rain. He concludes: "she washed it out of her remembering with tears. Yes, she was weeping again, now; it did, indeed, rain on that marriage." The poetic image and repetition here help blur the distinction between fact and legend, between history and myth. They give a spatial dimension to a chapter that is otherwise chronological, an emotional dimension to Compson, a narrator who is otherwise logical and rational.

Other images unify the chapter by being present in each section. For example, a crowd of townspeople appears in each: men on horseback gather in clumps to watch Sutpen raise his house. Men on horseback and on foot accost and follow Sutpen on the day he wins Ellen's hand. Men and women in carriages and drovers and traders on foot watch the church during the wedding ceremony. The first crowd is curious, the second self-righteous, the third hostile. As crowd images accumulate, the reader's impression of the people of Jefferson should become clear. The

30p. 49. 31p. 58.
reader should agree with the caustic judgments made by Compson about his father's peers, the ironic comments about "civic virtue," since these comments are reinforced by the several appearances of the townsmen. The moral failure of the citizens of Jefferson is three-fold: they reduce man to a curiosity; they reduce law to mob action; and they reduce sacrament to an isolated rather than a communal ritual.

In contrast to the crowd there are the images of Sutpen. The idleness of the onlookers out at Sutpen's Hundred is juxtaposed to the unflagging energy of the man building his estate. The hesitancy of the street mob is made obvious by the air of purpose and determination of the man courting his future wife. The covert silence of the crowd at the church as the rabble throws refuse is made the more despicable by the unflinching stance of the newly wedded man who is their target. The effect of these collected images should be to arouse sympathy for Sutpen. Why then does the reader not identify with him?

The reason for lack of reader sympathy for Sutpen grows out of the structure of the novel. The first chapter depicts Sutpen as a destructive force and a violent man. It is a picture presented by a haunted young man and a vindictive spinster, but it is a first impression, nevertheless, and consequently an influential one. Chapter II in isolation has a different meaning from Chapter II preceded by Chapter I. Qualified by its surroundings, the chapter takes on meaning that is not literally stated. While being told of Sutpen by a sympathetic narrator, the reader finds himself judging Sutpen the same way as the suspicious
mob of Jeffersonites does. Had the chapters been reversed, it is doubtful that Rosa's judgments would have been so effective. The reader's opinion is a direct result of the order of the chapters.

Analysis of Chapter III:
Biography of a Southern Woman

Chapter III is the second chapter in which the principal point of view belongs to Jason Compson. In contrast to the previous chapter, in which the legend of Sutpen seemed to have emerged unbidden from the twilight and the odor of wisteria surrounding the Compsons' porch, this chapter is a conscious answer to a conscious question. Quentin's question about Rosa's willingness to tell the story of Sutpen, even though it means revealing the insult she received at his hands, prompts Compson to tell the story of her life. Like the life of Sutpen, which tradition has written in very large letters, Rosa's biography is a grotesque caricature of an archetypal pattern. In addition, her story is told in terms of a single, all-absorbing event in her life: her removal to Sutpen's Hundred at the death of Charles Bon. This event is the lens through which Rosa's life is interpreted, and it becomes in other chapters the focal point not only for the Sutpen story but for Quentin. While Rosa's life has its universal aspects, there is also in her biography an attention to aspects that are peculiarly Southern. Rosa's is a Southern biography, and the central event in her life is a Southern event.
The chapter begins on the front porch of the Compsons where, in response to Quentin's question, Compson briefly explains when and why Rosa moved to Sutpen's Hundred and then begins the story of her life: her birth, her aunt, her father, her childhood. He returns again to her reasons for going to Sutpen's Hundred, and, in discussing the return of Sutpen himself after the war and the effect of his return on Rosa, he interjects an account of Glytie's birth and naming. Next he takes up the Coldfield-Sutpen visits of Rosa's childhood, especially the role or lack of role of Sutpen in these visits; and he describes the visits before and after the aunt eloped; the visits before and after Ellen retired to her room to stay; then finally the cessation of the visits.

Now Compson briefly reviews the history of Rosa's removal to Sutpen's Hundred and begins an account of Ellen's and Judith's excursions into town to shop and visit Rosa, one such visit being a prelude to a trip to Memphis for a trousseau in the summer following Charles Bon's first trip to Jefferson. During these visits Rosa projects her dreams upon Judith, much to Ellen's amusement, and between visits she keeps up with the rather extravagant life of the Sutpens through neighbors and townspeople who still distrust Sutpen though they have accepted him. Compson here interjects a note of doom: the grand flowering of the family was forced, and the next stage of their lives will be fateful. He then returns to the now-dwindling visits between the Coldfields and Sutpens: Rosa sees Henry in town once after he goes away to school; and she stops seeing Ellen, the
chattering, bauble-buying butterfly with dreams of Judith and Bon's marriage. Again a hint of doom is advanced by Compson, followed by an account of Charles Bon's position and history: Bon is the friend of Henry's whom Rosa never saw, whom Ellen sought as a precious possession for her estate, and on whom Rosa lavished all her vicarious dreams, even stealing from her father in order to make wedding garments for Bon's bride-to-be. Now Compson reports Ellen's retirement from life, Henry's vanishing, and the election of Lincoln. Rosa hears through servants or neighbors that Sutpen and Henry have quarreled and that Ellen is prostrate. Sutpen and Judith continue to be seen in town; and since Judith and Henry are known to be intensely loyal to each other, the town concludes that Henry's disappearance can not be serious, else Judith would behave differently toward her father.

Compson next begins the account of the war: Mississippi secedes and Sartoris and Sutpen form a regiment. Again he reviews events concerned with Rosa's stay at Sutpen's Hundred, in this case the sudden weight acquired by Sutpen after Rosa returned to town to live. Then Compson takes up the story of war again, describing Coldfield's protests and his eventual act of locking himself in the attic. Rosa must forage for food for the two of them, in the meanwhile writing odes to Southern soldiers. When Coldfield dies in his attic, she is an orphan and a pauper. Ellen has preceded her father in death, and Rosa might have gone to live with Judith, since Ellen on her death bed had asked her to. Compson speculates that Rosa felt Judith and Henry and Bon were all protected by their love and did not need her. He ends the chapter with the picture of Wash Jones shouting before Rosa's gate.
The story of Rosa, which gives the chapter its basic shape, can be divided into three parts: Rosa's childhood years, the years of her love for Bon, and the years of war and death. The three parts are parallel in that each portrays an attempt by a member of Rosa's family to shut out some aspect of reality. Those who influence Rosa most—her aunt, her sister, and her father—live in unreal worlds. The aunt denies the "male principle (that principle which had left the aunt a virgin at thirty-five)." She teaches Rosa to hate her father and her brother-in-law. She manages to visit Sutpen's Hundred on occasions when Sutpen is absent. Consequently, Rosa has an image of Sutpen not based on observation. The "ogre-face" that presided over her childhood was a face that she rarely saw before she was grown. After the aunt's escape, Ellen encases both herself and Rosa in a romantic world built around Judith and Henry and Bon, a world in which Rosa sits "beneath a bright glitter of delusion." The visits of Ellen and Judith leave Rosa filled with yearning for a face that she will never see, that of Charles Bon. With the cessation of Ellen's visits and the onset of the war, Rosa's father barricades himself and his daughter away from events. He effectively shuts out the community by refusing to let Rosa participate in the civil and social affairs associated with the war and, of course, by locking himself in the attic. Once more Rosa's life is governed by a person resisting reality.

32 Abolos, p. 60. Thomas Lorch has defined the male principle as the aggressive, creative, organizing principle of life as opposed to the female principle, the passive, sustaining principle of life. "Thomas Sutpen and the Female Principle," pp. 36-42.
It is a pathetic view of Rosa that the reader comes away with; a creature ill-prepared for the burdens she has to assume: the housekeeping chores left to her by the aunt who had taught her "that she was not only delicate but actually precious"; the protection of Judith, four years her senior, left to her by the sister who had laughed at her attempts to be helpful; the burden of existing in an economic society left to her by a mercantile father who had never taught her the use of coins. It is a sympathetic view; the child "lurking" forlornly in the hallways, the adolescent filled with "myopic and inarticulate yearning," the sixteen-year-old spinster in botched up house dresses is portrayed with understanding and kindness by Compson. It is also a grotesque view of archetypal patterns—the childhood fears of an ogre, the adolescent worship of an idol, and the young adult resentment of the vice-like grip of a strict parent—the "truth writ very large, like the magnified shadow of a common object, somewhat distorted but mainly a massive correspondence, gaining force by an immense looming simplification."

33 Warren Beck defines the grotesque in Faulkner's work as conceptual as well as stylistic, as thematic as well as technical. It is an expression of the comic and the tragic at the same time since human affairs are rarely just sad or just happy, but are most often complex mixtures of both, with the tone varying from the "ludicrous to the melancholy." "This total reality, comprising extremes and antitheses, strains the individual in his striving for comprehension and admits the liability to distortion, so that the grotesque emerges in dark profile against the illuminating ideal." The writer must "represent tragicomic reality as a whole, indivisible and irreducible without loss of essence." The grotesque becomes an element of total structure in that it is both a way of looking at the world and a stylistic device. *Man in Motion*, p. 198.

34 Ibid., p. 196. Beck also says that "the aesthetic resemblance [of the grotesque in Faulkner] to some modern painting is evident."
Rosa's life story functions in the structure of the novel as a whole in three ways. First, there are parallels between her attitude toward her native land and that of Quentin. If one can understand why Rosa can sentimentalize her homeland in verse while she looks upon two of its most representative members, her brother-in-law and her father, with the utmost contempt, why she can look with romantic eyes on a land whose people had used her unkindly, one can understand Quentin's declaration, "I don't hate the South." Second, the structure of her world, based as it is on seldom seen and unseen faces, corresponds to the structure of the society in which she lives. As the faces in her world have no solidity, so the values in her society remain superficial as long as there is fear of probing beneath them. Third, the impact of Charles Bon on the history of the Sutpens is first indicated by his decisive role in the life of Rosa.

Inasmuch as the death of Bon becomes one of the central events of the novel, it is interesting to see how it is introduced. The event has been alluded to in the first chapter in horrific terms by Rosa's descriptions of Henry as "the son who widowed the daughter," the son who returned home as a "murderer and almost a fratricide," the one who returned home to "practically fling the bloody corpse of his sister's sweetheart at the hem of her wedding gown," the child "doomed to be a murderer." However, the identity of the corpse and Henry's victim is not revealed. There is no mention of either the event or the victim in

35Absalom, pp. 11, 15, 18, 22.
the second chapter. Bon's name is first mentioned about one quarter of the way through the third chapter. His death is noted calmly—"if Charles Bon had not died"—and parenthetically—Miss Rosa entered Charles Bon's death in the family Bible along with those of the members of her family. Other details emerge. Bon is a university friend of Henry's, older than Henry, who visits Sutpen's Hundred during Christmas and summer vacation of their first year at school before going home to New Orleans. Rumors of his engagement to Judith are sparked by Ellen, though apparently he and Judith have not discussed it. He returns to Sutpen's Hundred the next Christmas, and he and Henry leave suddenly after Henry has renounced his birthright. Both join a company of university students as privates in the war, and Judith keeps in touch with them. Other than these details of his goings and comings, there are two views of him cited. Ellen thinks of him as a "garment for Judith," a "piece of furniture" for her house, a polished example for Henry, in short, another possession for the Sutpens. Rosa views him as elegant in manner, handsome in person, rich in possessions, and mysterious in origin. In her worshipful attitude, he is something of a redeemer for the Coldfields to efface the degradation brought by Sutpen. In her romantic view, Bon will be preserved by love from danger in war.

At this point, tantalizingly little is known about Bon other than that he is the object of wishful thinking for two starry-eyed sisters. But his decisive role is alluded to, even though in such a way that the reader may fail to grasp its significance. The cataclysmic nature of his death is stated in three passages. The first two call the death a
a catastrophe; in the first, Compson supposes that even as a child
Rosa had the soothsayer's ability to know "of the future catastrophe
in which the ogre-face of her childhood would vanish . . . " The
second passage reads as follows:

Now the period began which ended in the catastrophe which caused
a reversal so complete in Miss Rosa as to permit her to agree to
marry the man whom she had grown up to look upon as an ogre. It
was not a volte-face of character: that did not change. Even
her behavior did not change to any great extent. Even if Charles
Bon had not died, she would in all probability have gone out to
Sutpen's Hundred to live after her father's death sooner or
later . . . .

For several reasons, the reader probably assumes that the catastrophe is
the Civil War. One, Rosa has already told of her attitude toward the man
who did valorous duty for his country in the war, "villain dyed though he
be." She could view Sutpen as a hero because of the "catastrophe"
that was the war. Two, references to Rosa's odes to the Civil War
soldiers were mentioned just prior to the first passage, and remarks
about Sutpen's service in the war began the chapter. Three, war images
have been frequently used: Rosa and the aunt at war with Sutpen, and
Coldfield compared to a picket armed with biblical passages for ar-
tillery. Four, in the second passage, "catastrophe" is preceded by the
word "period" with its connotations of a historical era. However, a
closer inspection of the second passage reveals that the catastrophe
referred to is Bon's death. The manuscript version of this passage
makes it even clearer: it begins "Now the period began which ended with
the happening which caused the complete volte-face . . . " and ends "It

was only the happening which sent her there and only it that caused or brot her to agree to marry him."

A third passage reads "he [Henry] had not yet returned to play his final part in his family's doom . . . ." At this point the reader knows from the first chapter and from Rose that Henry has murdered his sister's prospective husband, and from the third chapter and from Compson that Ellen had decided that Judith was to marry Charles Bon. The conclusion that Charles Bon and Henry's victim are the same comes from the reader, not from the narrators; and the conclusion that Bon's death played a major role in the family's fortunes is one that the reader may miss altogether because of the ambiguous nature of the references to the event. The reader, like the family, has been introduced to Charles Bon without realizing the dramatic role that he is to play.

The first two of the above passages identify the family crisis with the nation's travail by the ambiguous use of the word "catastrophe." Other such passages occur, passages that on one level point to the particular and on another level suggest the general. The description of the house at the time of Ellen's last illness could also be a description of her homeland: "the house on which fateful mischance had already laid its hand to the extent of scattering the black foundation on which it had been erected and removing its two male mainstays, husband and son . . . ." The portrayal of Sutpen's rapid physical deterioration after the war has political, even moral, as

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39 MS, p. 28. 40 Absalom, p. 86. 41 Ibid., p. 78.
well as physiological meaning:

The flesh came upon him suddenly, as though ... the fine figure of a man had reached and held its peak after the foundation had given away and something between the shape of him that people knew and the uncompromising skeleton of what he actually was had gone fluid and, earthbound, had been snubbed up and restrained, balloonlike, unstable and lifeless, by the envelope which it had betrayed.42

And if the identification is subtle in these passages, it is deliberate in another. The following sentence, by equating the destiny of the Sutpens with that of the state, merges the particular and the general and emphasizes the mythic level of meaning only suggested in the previous passages:

Because the time now approached (it was 1860, even Mr. Coldfield probably admitted that war was unavoidable) when the destiny of Sutpen's family which for twenty years now had been like a lake welling from quiet springs into a quiet valley and spreading, rising almost imperceptibly and in which the four members of it floated in sunny suspension, felt the first subterranean movement toward the outlet, the gorge which would be the land's catastrophe too, and the four peaceful swimmers turning suddenly to face one another, not yet with alarm or distrust but just alert, feeling the dark set, none of them yet at that point where man looks about at his companions in disaster and thinks When will I stop trying to save them and save only myself? and not even aware that that point was approaching.43

Biography is the structural basis of this chapter, biography organized by one event and peculiar to one culture. There are other structural qualities in the chapter. As in the first two chapters, there are cumulating images—the ogre-face of Rosa's childhood and the butterfly image associated with Ellen. There is a refrain—"so she [Rosa] didn't see them [Ellen and Judith] any more"—that appears in the second
section of the chapter. There is the disjunction of time—Compson
stops Rosa's life story to go back to Sutpen's for a moment. There is
the omnipresent face of Sutpen. And there is the frame story. The
past is being recreated in the presence of a youthful auditor, who,
in this chapter for the first time, guides the direction of the story.
The direction is inward toward motive, Rosa's motive for telling her
story, and that motivating force, though revealed only indirectly in
this chapter, is due to be a major factor in Chapter IV.

In the manuscript, the focus on Bon was not as steady as it is in
the completed version. Several changes subtly sharpen the focus. One
addition has the effect of introducing Judith's supposed engagement two
and one-half sentences earlier. In the original, it is given that
Judith and Ellen were to go to Memphis, that Henry had been at school,
that Sutpen had been to New Orleans, and that Rosa sees in Judith an
embodiment of her dreams; then it is revealed that Judith is considered
a bride-to-be. In the published work, the revelation comes first,
giving meaning to the trip to Memphis and to Sutpen's trip to New
Orleans, and focusing Rosa's yearning on Bon as well as Judith. In
manuscript the allusion to a wedding is parenthetical: Rosa offered
Judith "the only gift (and it of necessity offered to the bride's
equipment and not to the bride: .. .)" that she had to offer. In the
novel the reference to a wedding occupies a periodic position in the
sentence. Indeed it is a weighted addition to a sentence in the manu-
script that ended with the word "clothes": Ellen announced that she and
Judith were on their way "overland to Memphis to buy Judith clothes:
yes: a trousseau." (MS, p. 30, Absalom, p. 70). Ironically an engage-
ment that never happened is made more precise and more central by
revision, an irony that underscores the illusory world created by images
of flitting faces in Chapter I and unseen faces in this chapter.

In other cases of revision, two events that really occurred are
made more ambiguous: the birth and death of Charles Bon. Mystery is
added to Bon's origins; in the manuscript his parentage is vague: he has
a legal guardian rather than parents. This vagueness is elaborated in
emendation: he was "a personage who . . . must have appeared almost
phoenix-like, fullspring from no childhood, born of no woman and im-
pervious to time and, vanished, leaving no bones nor dust anywhere
. . . ." (MS, p. 32, Absalom, p. 71). Reference to Bon's death in the
manuscript is specific: "Henry had not returned yet to kill Charles
Bon on the doorstep," and "Henry has done shot that durn French fellow.
kilt him dead as a beef." In publication the first sentence is revised
to read "Henry had not yet returned to play his final part in his family's doom," and the second sentence, an announcement by Wash Jones, is omitted from the end of this chapter and placed at the end of Chapter IV. (MS, p. 37; Absalom, p. 66). The revision from "doorstep" to "doom" is a movement from the specific to the general, from the personal to the universal, a movement in the direction of symbol and myth. (A similar revision occurs on MS page 25. "Niece's father [Sutpen]" is changed to "family's doom." Absalom, p. 59.)

The omission of Wash's announcement creates suspense as both Langford (Collation, p. 23) and Millgate (Achievement, p. 150) have noted. The reader does not yet know the purpose of Wash's shouting at Rosa's gate. Ambiguity and mystery surround Bon's death at this point in the novel.

The pivotal nature of Bon's death is emphasized by another change. When Compson is probing the reasons for Rosa's agreeing to marry Sutpen, he insists that it was because Sutpen changed, not because Rosa did. The death of Bon made the "ogre-face (Sutpen's) of her childhood . . . apparently vanish so completely that she would agree to marry the late owner of it." In the manuscript "late" was not included. (MS, p. 27; Absalom, p. 66). Bon's death changed the face of Sutpen for Rosa, and the addition underscores the generating force of his death.

Not only is Bon's role heightened, but Rosa's father's role is better focused than in the manuscript. Coldfield's relation to his son-in-law and daughter is played down. The deal between Sutpen and Coldfield is almost revealed in the manuscript but not mentioned in the book. It seems that Coldfield had withdrawn "from that old affair in which his future son-in-law had involved him not only at the cost of his just profits but at the sacrifice of his original investment . . . ." The account of the deal at this point in the story is completely eliminated in revision. On the same page of the manuscript there is the line "Mr. Coldfield knew Ellen too," the implication being that he knew there was no forthcoming wedding between Bon and Judith. This sentence is left out in revision. One early description of Coldfield was also eliminated and another moved to the third section of the chapter, thus magnifying Coldfield's role in this section. (MS, pp. 25, 33, 35; Absalom, pp. 59, 77, 81).

One other revision should be mentioned because it is further evidence that myth was a major factor in constructing the novel. There is a description of the Civil War in the manuscript that is full of the passion and emotion of this particular war expressed in the concluding clause of the sentence: "while one half of the nation flung a gauntlet in the face of the other half by the election of a president and the other half flung it back by firing cannon at a United States flag." The revision removes the emotion and the emphasis and evokes an epic theme in the phrase "knell and doom of her native land": the revised passage reads, "while news came of Lincoln's election and of the fall of Sumpter, and she scarce listening, hearing and losing the knell and doom of her native land between two tedious and clumsy stitches on a garment which she would never wear and never remove for a man whom she was not even to see alive." (MS, p. 33; Absalom, p. 78). As Justus has explained, the fall of the homeland and the anatomy of love are two
epic themes. ("Epic Design," pp. 157-158). Both are captured in the revised passage, the fall of the homeland being secondary to love because Rosa works on the wedding garment in spite of and unmindful of the war. Her efforts are made on behalf of her vicarious love for Bon. The revision is similar to others in this and the preceding chapters in that the particular and the real, in this case the Civil War, become general and universal.

Revisions that should have been made in the chapter are two. If Langford is right in saying that Faulkner's final intent was that Compson should be ignorant of Bon's parentage until Quentin discloses it after his night visit to Sutpen's Hundred, then Faulkner should not have had Compson say: "yes, he named Clytie as he named them all, the one before Clytie and Henry and Judith even ......." (P. 62, italics mine). He did omit another reference to Compson's knowledge, one in which Compson spoke of Sutpen's children "which, with the two exceptions, were girls." (MS, p. 26, italics mine). A more inconsequential error has to do with the number of years that the aunt lived with Rosa. On page 60, it is said that for the "first sixteen years of her [Rosa's] life she lived ... with the father ... and the aunt ..." On pages 63 and 64, it is said that Rosa was ten when the aunt eloped.

Analysis of Chapter IV:
The Meaning of Things Past: Psychology

In Chapter IV, the concluding portion of Compson's narration is framed by the omniscient narrator's attention to and citation of Bon's letter, a letter written to Judith near the end of the Civil War from an encampment in Carolina. The chapter exemplifies Faulkner's technique of juxtaposition and utilizes a psychological pattern of development, typical of many modern writers. There is in the chapter a rising emotional intensity created through attention to the dilemmas of the three young people, Judith, Henry, and Charles Bon. Compson's narration is generally felt by critical readers to be worldly in tone, with the structure of classical tragedy.

Chapter IV begins in the present in the twilight on the Compson's porch. A narrator close to Quentin envisions Miss Rosa waiting in a
darkened room for Quentin to come. Compson brings out a letter for
Quentin to read; but, before giving it to him begins to talk, contending
that the trouble between Sutpen and Henry was Bon’s being married, that
Henry renounced his birthright in the face of Sutpen’s declaration that
Bon was already married, and that he (Henry) did it because he loved
Bon. Compson continues: because Judith loved Henry she waited while
Henry decided what to do. Bon himself, analyzed by Compson as urbane,
detached, imperturbable, pessimistic, must have been surprised that his
having a mistress was cause for such an uproar. He loved Judith, as
his letter shows, and Judith never had any other sweetheart than Bon.
He was idolized by a devoted and impulsive Henry who loved him even after
he killed him, who courted Judith for him, Henry, the country boy only
superficially different from the slaves in his father’s fields. Compson
puzzles that Judith insisted on marrying Bon, whom she had seen for only
a few hours in her life, that Sutpen forbade the marriage for so little
cause, that Henry killed Bon for wanting that which Henry himself had
wanted enough to give up his home and family for, that Bon suddenly
decided to marry the Judith he had hitherto shown only passive interest
in, that the apparent reason for all the trouble was Bon’s octoroon wife.
Still puzzling, Compson recounts the first visit of Bon at Christmas, the
events between Christmas and June, the second visit of Bon, the events
of summer, the return to school in the fall, the next Christmas visit,
and the departure of Henry and Bon for good.

The two go to New Orleans where, according to Compson, Henry has
to learn of Bon’s mistress, has to admit his father had been right; where
Bon gently introduces the country youth to the life style of the city, corrupts him with delicacy, and takes him at last to see the octoroon and her son, defending the system that nurtured the octoroon and discrediting the morganatic ceremony by which the octoroon became his.

Still puzzling as to why Henry waited four years to act, Compson begins the account of the youths' military career, still believing that Judith was for them only an instrument of their love for each other, believing they hoped the war would settle their dilemma, and believing that Judith waited because she trusted both her father and her brother. The story moves faster: the youths hide out until their regiment departs Jefferson; Bon becomes a lieutenant; the Sutpen women are dependent on Wash Jones while the Sutpen men are gone; Judith participates in the war effort; Ellen dies; then Coldfield dies. The letter is spoken of again: after Bon is buried, Judith carries it to Mrs. Compson (Quentin's grandmother) in hopes that it will be remembered and assures Mrs. Compson that she intends to live, to look after Clytie and Sutpen.

The omniscient narrator reports that Quentin reaches for the preserved letter. Compson again talks of Bon's letters. The preserved letter is cited; then Compson reviews the events that followed its receipt: Judith begins her wedding dress; Henry pronounces an ultimatum; and Bon defies him. Quentin is seen imagining the picture of Henry and Bon riding up gaunt and determined. Finally, Compson tells of Wash Jones's announcement before Rosa's gate.

The narration of Compson was well organized in the second chapter, the legend of Sutpen apparently so well known that it came easily. His
story of Absa, too, follows a pattern as if it were a familiar tale. In this chapter, there appears to be less chronology and less form in his story. Repetition that in the other chapters had the quality of a refrain, in this chapter becomes an annoying mannerism. Using very limited knowledge of events, Compson interprets both people and events in the light of his belief that the morganatic marriage was the cause of the fateful actions of the Sutpens; thus, he widely misses the mark in some instances. The repetitive and speculative nature of the material does not encourage belief, and the reader's faith in Compson's veracity begins to waver.

Aside from the style there is another cause for reader resistance: Faulkner's characteristic habit of placing unrelated or contradictory blocks of material side by side. Two examples are evident in this chapter, one having to do with Bon, the other with his death. In the first instance, reader attitude toward Bon has been prejudiced in his favor by the preceding chapter: he is the stuff of romance. Suddenly, Compson calls him a bigamist and a blackguard and continues to denigrate him with such phrases as "dilatory indolent," "catlike man," and "esoteric hothouse bloom." The view of Bon as a pessimist, a fatalist, a world-weary cynic contrasts sharply with the impression left by Chapter III. It also contrasts with the view Bon leaves of

\[\text{In the MS, the estimate of Bon as a bigamist and a blackguard is said to be Sutpen's. "Bon . . ., according to Henry's father, was a blackguard; a bigamist if Henry's father was correct, was a scoundrel." In revision the judgment is not attributed to anyone. It seems to be Compson's. See MS, p. 39, Absalom, p. 90.}\]
himself through his letter. Granted, the letter is written after a period of privation that might have made a different man of him. Nevertheless, the note arouses a sympathy for the man that Compson has not elicited. (Since it is all the evidence Compson has on which to base Bon's character, the reader is moved to make some judgments of Compson's own spirit and personality because of his interpretation of Bon.) Bon, through his letter reveals himself as chivalrous ("I do not insult you . . ."), as having had his faith in man restored, as able to see the humor of a bad situation (the capture of the stove polish), as hopeful (he will stop thinking and remembering, but not hoping), and as looking toward the future (the past is Was, the present is Is). His revelation of himself contradicts not only Compson's but the omniscient narrator's estimate of him as "incurably pessimistic." The five juxtaposed views of Bon--Rosa's and Ellen's romantic ones in the previous chapter, Compson's and the omniscient narrator's pessimistic ones, and Bon's own, while they correct and complement each other, also raise questions as to the real nature of Charles Bon and prevent the reader from saying with certainty whether Charles Bon is the villain or hero.

The letter is much extended in revision, the middle section, in parentheses, having been added. The addition is an analysis of the nature of war (it is but an echo) and of the body's response to hardship (it endures obliviously), and between the two analyses there is an expression of hope. The published letter also contains a metaphor not in the MS: the hungry and frightened person "extracts the ultimate essence out of laughing as the empty stomach extracts the ultimate essence out of alcohol." One other notable revision changes "voice from the forgotten" to "voice from the defeated." It is Langford's conclusion that the additional material amplifies Bon's character. Collation, p. 28, MS, pp. 56-57, Absalom, pp. 129-132.
The second instance of multiple views of one incident occurs on the last two pages of the chapter. The murder of Bon is treated in three different ways. Compson describes it in formal terms, "the ultimatum discharged before the gate"; Quentin pictures it in his mind, the desolate setting, the unkempt youths. And Wash Jones shouts irreverently before Rosa's gate, "Henry has done shot that durn French feller. Kilt him dead as a beef." Again each treatment qualifies the meaning of the other. Is the death a result of a duel of honor, as Compson would have it; or is it a consequence of a duel of love, as Quentin sees it; or is it, as Wash implies, the riddance of an alien? Perhaps it is significant that Wash's interpretation is given climactic position.

A second structural technique in this chapter is the use of the thought process as an organizing principle. Volpe has said that the characteristics of human thought determine the form of *Absalom, Absalom*. This thesis becomes true for the first time in Chapter IV. In the first chapter Faulkner has achieved the effect of human emotion by using poetic techniques. In this chapter he achieves the effect of human thought also by using parallelism and repetition and maintains that effect even while going forward with a chronology of events.

The parallelism is subtle, as the following passage will illustrate:

Bon and Henry came from the University to spend that first Christmas. Judith and Ellen and Sutpen saw him for the first time—Judith, the man whom she was to see for an elapsed time of twelve

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days, yet to remember so that four years later (he never wrote her during that time. Henry would not let him; it was the probation, you see) when she received a letter from him saying we have waited long enough, she and Clytie should begin at once to fashion a wedding dress and veil out of rags and scraps; Ellen, the esoteric, the almost baroque, the almost epigone objet d'art which with childlike voracity she essayed to include in the furnishing and decoration of her house; Sutpen, the man whom, after seeing once and before any engagement existed anywhere save in his wife's mind, he saw as a potential threat to the (now and at last) triumphant coronation of his old hardships and ambition of which threat he was apparently sure enough to warrant a six hundred mile journey to prove it—this in a man who might have challenged and shot someone whom he disliked or feared but who would not have made even a ten mile journey to investigate him.47

The parallel structure is not only subtle but elliptical: "Judith [saw] the man whom . . .," "Ellen [saw] the . . . objet d'art . . . which . . .," "Sutpen [saw] the man whom . . ." The distraction brought on by the power of suggestion, i.e., the parenthetical comment on correspondence suggested by the word "letter," is characteristic of human thought. This kind of distraction is typical, and often multiplied, one thing leading to another, but the parallel construction keeps the material from being truly chaotic.

A second controlling device is chronological sequence. This device begins with the above passage. A continuation of the passage reads,

You see? You would almost believe that Sutpen's trip to New Orleans was just sheer chance, just a little more of the illogical machinations of a fatality which had chosen that family in preference to any other in the county or the land exactly as a small boy chooses one ant-hill to pour boiling water into48 in preference to any other, not even himself knowing why. Ben and Henry stayed two weeks and rode back to school, stopping to see Miss Rosa but she

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47P. 101.

48"To pour boiling water into" is a revision of "to hold matches to." MS, p. 115, Absalom, p. 102.
was not at home; they passed the long term before the summer vacation talking together and riding and reading (Bon was reading the law). 49

The passage continues with the parenthetical comments on Bon and Henry and law before returning once again to chronology. From this passage on, the narrative may stray into character analysis or speculation or puzzlement or philosophy, but there is in the background the forward movement of the events in the lives of Henry and Bon and Judith. In the case of the cited passage, the events are already known, having been revealed in the third chapter and reiterated several times already in this chapter. It is this repetition, this sense of going back and back over the same material that produces the effect of the mind pondering a situation. It is a different kind of repetition from the refrain, which is also used. The effect is a disordered repetition of events just as the giving way to the power of suggestion creates the effect of rambling and chaotic arrangement of material. Actually, however, there is a firm structure of parallelism and sequence.

It is surmised by the reader at the beginning of the chapter that Henry killed Bon. It is made definite almost immediately by Compson's narration. And yet the reader is surprised to find at the end of the chapter that, though he has been told numerous times during the course of the chapter that Henry killed Bon, the retelling of the deed evokes an emotional response. The building of emotional intensity is done in

49P. 102.
several ways: typography, characterization, order, and repetition. The issues of the chapter, the issues in the Son, Henry, Judith relationship as Compson sees them, are expressed in the italicized passages. The long sentences and rambling, wide-ranging paragraphs lead the reader on at a dizzying pace so that an italicized passage is a relief. Such a passage gives pause, not only because it is physically different, but also because it is simple and direct in contrast to the complex, intricate, and subtle longer passages. Thus, no matter how confused the reader may be, he is clear about the issues and conflicts because they are expressed in italics, and these passages reveal the anguish of the three principal characters in this chapter. Henry must justify having chosen friend over father: "I will believe! I will!"

The typography of *Absalom, Absalom!* is the subject of an article by John A. Hodgson, who says that typography indicates "discontinuities of time (past versus present), mode of expression (speech versus thought), and attention (to internal versus external phenomena, that is, to one's thoughts versus one's senses) in the course of the narrative." His scheme for Faulkner's typography follows:

- " " = directly quoted speeches
- italics = interior monologues
- thought presented as direct but unvoiced quotations
- thoughts from the present
- quoted thoughts
- ' ' = speeches: actual or conjectural
- ( ) = interruptions in time and narrative

His conclusion that the unique typography of Chapter III (speech tags are in italics and speeches are not in quotation marks) indicates that the time of the chapter was after Quentin's visit to Sutpen's Hundred is interesting, but the basis for his conclusion (Compson's saying "the one before Clytie") is weak since the manuscript indicates that Faulkner eliminated one reference to Compson's knowledge and probably intended to eliminate all such references. "Logical Sequence and Continuity: Some Observations on the Typographical and Structural Consistency of *Absalom, Absalom!*" *American Literature*, 43 (March 1971), 97-107.
Whether it is true or not, I will believe."\textsuperscript{51} He must be willing to give all and ask nothing in return. He cannot say "I did this for love of you; do this for love of me."

Judith must live with whatever outcome is right, whether it be a happy or a painful one: "I love. I will accept no substitute, something has happened between him and my father; if my father was right, I will never see him again, if wrong he will come or send for me; if happy I can be I will, if suffer I must I can."\textsuperscript{53} And Bon must wait and not know the outcome. His question "Have I won or lost?"\textsuperscript{54} is answered by himself: "I have waited long enough. I do not renounce. For four years now I have given chance the opportunity to renounce for me, but it seems that I am doomed to live, that she and I both are doomed to live . . . ."\textsuperscript{55} It is also answered at the climax of the chapter in the exchange between himself and Henry, "Don't you pass the shadow of this post, this branch, Charles"; and "I am going to pass it, Henry."\textsuperscript{56} This final italicized passage represents the end of belief for Henry, the beginning of suffering for Judith, and the end of hope for Bon. Whereas the previous passages have been expressed in terms of abstractions—truth, belief, love, suffering, chance, doom—this passage is concrete and particular—Charles and Henry, post and branch. The anguish becomes a living thing. The abstract passages are Compson's and the concrete passage belongs to Quentin, the first indication that he is becoming emotionally involved.

\textsuperscript{51}Pp. 90, 111, 112. \textsuperscript{52}P. 91. \textsuperscript{53}P. 121. \textsuperscript{54}P. 114. \textsuperscript{55}P. 132. \textsuperscript{56}P. 133.
The inner conflicts of the characters are one source of tension in the chapter. Another is the contradictory attitudes toward the characters that the reader develops. He wants to sympathize with Henry, the country boy being corrupted, but knows that Henry is of a violent and impulsive nature and has renounced his family for a man he will murder. The ambivalent attitude toward Bon has already been mentioned. Judith is pictured as a headstrong Sutpen of her father's mold, ruthless when it comes to getting what she wants; a devoted daughter and sister, yet willing to marry Bon against the wishes of father and brother; a Southern woman strong enough to carry on in the face of war and death. Sympathy for Judith is perhaps given grudgingly. The order of the character development plays a crucial role in determining where the reader's sympathies will finally lie. Henry's love and sacrifice for Bon are reiterated six times through the first two-thirds of the chapter. Bon receives unflattering attention through most of the chapter; then his letter is cited. Judith is rather neglected until the last third of the chapter, where her activities in the face of privation and heartache and her words to Quentin's grandmother gain sympathy.\footnote{Judith's speech is longer in revision than in manuscript. The pattern in the rug analogy is added; "block of stone" replaces the more colloquial "chunk of marble"; and the portion of the speech reading "not even bother to throw it away or destroy it, at least it would be something just because it would have happened, be remembered even if only from passing from one hand to another, one mind to another, and it would be at least a scratch, something, something that might make a mark or something that was once for the reason that it can die someday, while the block of stone can't be is because it never can become was because it can't ever die or perish" is added. (MS, p. 56, Absalom, p. 127). The addition to Judith's speech not only enriches her characterization}
Reader identification at the end of the chapter lies with Judith and Bon and makes the murder of Bon more poignant at this point than it was when reader sympathy was with Henry.

Repetition also plays a role in building emotional intensity. The fact of the murder is noted at least twelve times before the climactic announcement of it. Most of these notations come in the section of the chapter given to sympathetic treatment of Henry. It is a fact hammered at unrelentingly. But repetition alone could not have created this particular climax. Conflict within the characters and within the reader, augmented by the order and repetition of the material, gives intensity of a painful and poignant nature to this chapter.

At this point, it might be well to look at the whole of Compson's narration thus far. He has one more story to tell—that of Rosa's death—a story told in a letter, half of which is in the sixth chapter, the rest in the ninth chapter. He will be quoted again from time to time by Quentin, but these quotations are not yet a part of this discussion. In terms of the narration already completed, it may be said that Compson's interests are social, psychological, and intellectual, and that the structure of his narration resembles classic tragedy.

as the additions to Bon's letter amplify his, it also links her to Bon in language: both use "was" and "is" in terms of past and present and both express the desire to be identified with "is," the living rather than the dead. The "mark" on something that "was" can also be linked to Bon's letter which was a Northern stove polish mark on a Southern paper, the polish "manufactured not twelve months ago in a New England factory," and the paper "dated seventy years ago" with a French water-mark, "salvaged from the gutted mansion of a ruined aristocrat." (P. 129).
The three chapters in Compson's narration of the Sutpen story are arranged in chronological order with some overlapping: Chapter II covers Sutpen's first five years in Jefferson (1833-1838); Chapter III reviews Rosa's first twenty years (1845-1865); and Chapter IV describes the relationship between Henry and Judith and Bon (1859-1865). They begin with Sutpen's arrival in Jefferson and end with the announcement of Bon's death. Sutpen is the center of the first story, an unseen face in the second, and the backstage source of conflict in the third in that he forbade the marriage of Judith and Bon. Bon is absent in the first story, an unseen face in the second, and a central figure in the third. A marriage is the culmination of the first of Compson's chapters; a marriage wished for hovers over the second; and a morganatic marriage is the central issue in the third. This concern with history and the examination of the varying male-female relationships point to Compson as a man interested in the nature of society. A picture of Southern slave society evolves from his depiction of the various marriages.

In Chapter II, Ellen and Sutpen marry for reasons of dynasty and social position. The father and the future husband make the arrangements; the woman is economic chattel, even though her illusions of romance are catered to by Sutpen in his bringing the newspaper cornucopia of flowers and in his concessions at the time of the wedding. In Chapter III, there is a glimpse of Rosa's proposed marriage to Sutpen as an act of retribution, and a reference to Sutpen's fathering of Clytis as an act of breeding a good slave. (Later, Rosa's proposed marriage will be seen as a breeding union.) Also, in this chapter,
a wedding dreamed of for social and romantic reasons is projected and prepared for. The brother and the mother do the courting and the aunt prepares wedding garments. The couple themselves are wish fulfillments for others. In Chapter IV, a marriage is contracted for the sole purpose of pleasure and participated in only by the privileged. A society breeds and trains women to become possessions rare and exotic. The picture of marriage is further complicated by the decision of Bon (as announced in his letter) and Judith (as evidenced by her work on a wedding gown) to marry without courtship and without family sanction. Theirs is a decision based on the assumption in Bon's letter that the past is dead and the demands of the past no longer hold. The shot that revokes their decision is an echo out of the past. The complexity of relationships between man and woman in these chapters may be said to be the fruit of a marriage that has not yet been revealed, a marriage unknown to Compson as he tells his story. Structurally speaking, the effects have been presented before the cause.

57 The discussion of the man-woman relationship in a slave society is extended considerably in revision. In defense of the octoroon arrangement, Bon is said to have explained that the system makes "a perfectly normal human instinct" graceful and pleasure-giving whereas the Anglo-Saxon makes it a sinful act and an economic institution. MS, p. 52, Absalom, pp. 115-117.

58 In her discussion of marital relationships in the novel, Lind emphasizes the racial and psychological aspects. Denial of affection because of color of skin "breeds psychic outrage" which in turn "breeds personal revolt" and "vengeance." ("Design and Meaning," p. 295). There is also the element of denial based on sex that should not be overlooked. Women were regarded as possessions and as breeders regardless of their color. Miss Rosa's psychic outrage at being approached as an animal had nothing to do with race.
The psychological dimensions of Compson's narration are discussed by several critics. A. C. Hoffman believes that Compson is pondering the fall of a house and "pursues the psychological roots which led" to it and that in pondering the past, he also reveals the psychological roots of his own time. The fall of a house would be precipitated by marital failure of some sort. The emphasis on marriage, especially the views of it as an economic institution, signifies the loss of human dignity, the decay in human relationships, that would create a psychological crisis.

The "psychic outrage" resulting from the loss of human dignity is one aspect of the psychological discussed by Lind. She also indicates the "profound spiritual resignation" that Compson brings to his narration. His is an "intellectual analysis undertaken from the refuge of personal retreat." He pictures Bon as rather a villain when Bon's letter would suggest otherwise, and his depiction does make him seem cynical, but, on the other hand, sympathy for the members of the Sutpen family and for Rosa is evident and seems to belie his oft-commented-upon references to fate and chance as the sole arbiters of human affairs. Unequivocal judgments about Compson, as about any of Faulkner's people, are risky.

The intellectuality of Compson is well-documented. Vickery believes he "describes a battle of ideas or concepts and not a conflict

59 "Point of View in Absalom, Absalom!" University of Kansas City Review, 19 (1953), 234.
of people. Compson speaks of Judith as the ruthless aggressor and Henry as the weigher of moral choices—an ideological distinction that is also made between Sutpen and the townspeople. Compson depicts the Henry-Bon relationship as a conflict between puritan and exotic lifestyles as well as a conflict between loyalty to family and loyalty to friend.

A thesis subscribed to by a number of critics is explained by L. G. Levins. He describes the structure of Compson's narrative as that of a Greek tragedy. Levins includes narrative in chapters yet to come and material outside of Compson's story, but basically his conclusions are these: Compson describes Sutpen as a man of heroic stature, celebrated in Southern myth for his deeds, but with a fatal flaw—an error in judgment (which in Compson's view is paying too much attention to a morganatic marriage but which turns out to be denying his son). This man rises to the pinnacle of success during a period which is followed by war and is destroyed by his own act of denial. By forbidding the marriage of Judith and Bon, he loses his son and heir and thus his dynasty.

If Compson's narration is a drama of a tragic hero, it is one in which the hero remains offstage during the last two acts. As a matter of fact, none of the actors appears in all three of Compson's chapters, though the narrator himself and his auditor do. The purpose of these
three chapters is to bring to center stage the death of Charles Bon. It is the event that destroys the house of Sutpen, but as in other cases, it is an effect, not a cause. The factors which lead to Bon's death have yet to be revealed.

Analysis of Chapter V:

A Southern Woman: Autobiography and Poetry

Chapter V, seen from Rosa's point of view, is the center chapter of the novel, made outstanding not only by its position and its typography, but also by its revelation of the central theme of the novel. The whole chapter partakes of the structural qualities of modern fiction: the part that is the whole, the multi-level quest, the fusion of past and present, the reflexive image, and the mythic character. There is also the incidental revelation of details and effects that will later be elaborated and explained, a method characteristic of Faulkner. The chapter concludes Rosa's direct contributions to the story, leaving an impression that will color the interpretations of both reader and conarrators.

In this italicized chapter, Rosa tells of her trip to Sutpen's Hundred after Charles Bon's death, with that "brute progenitor of brutes," Wash Jones, and of her encounter with Clytie on her arrival; then she interrupts briefly to recall another visit to Sutpen's Hundred in the summer of her fourteenth year; she returns to 1865 to rehearse Judith's response to her arrival and to Bon's death, describing the funeral; next she pictures the life of the three women as they wait for Sutpen to return, recalling the poignant scene of his arrival; finally,
having revealed the circumstances of her engagement to Sutpen, she
discloses that the engagement was terminated, whereupon she returned
home to a meager subsistence for the next forty-three years, hearing
from a neighbor some years later of Sutpen's death. At the conclusion
of her story, Quentin reenacts the scene in Judith's bedroom when
Henry announced Bon's murder.

This singular chapter attracts scholarly attention on its own
merits. J. R. Raper, believing the major theme of the novel is the
thwarted life and the key images are closed doors, very naturally
sees this chapter as a central one since it is the expression of a
woman thwarted many times. In his study, he is interested primarily
in comparing Faulkner's structural technique to the montage technique
of cinematographer Sergei Eisenstein. The first paragraph serves as
an example. In it are juxtaposed twelve unlinked elements, which in
combination evoke a theme of frustration. Other examples are the
frozen moments that Faulkner creates which give a sense of Rosa's
suspended development. Raper discusses the scene in which Clytie
holds Rosa by the arm, the scene in which Judith blocks Rosa from the
door to the room in which Bon lies dead, and the scene in which Sutpen
insults Rosa as being scenes in which doors are closed and life is
suspended for her.63

Whereas Raper looks at the chapter's resemblance to the cinema,
Cleanth Brooks compares Rosa's speech to poetry, pointing out its

rhythm, its inner logic (e.g. the "polymath love" phrase has been prepared for in Rosa's saying she was a man), the poetic imagery, the Shakesperian echoes, and the passion. Brooks concludes that Rosa's discourse is never banal, always strong, and contains "flecks of genuine poetry."64

In another discussion, Leslie E. Angell singles out the umbilical cord image that unites Rosa and Clytie65 and points to the effect it has on the unity of the novel. This image is repeated in Chapter VII: the umbilical unites Quentin and Shreve66 in one instance and an umbilical water-cord unites Quentin, Shreve, and Compson in another instance.67 The first use of the image serves to make Rosa aware of "the universal bond of basic humanity," and the succeeding uses suggest a synthesis of all views, all times, and all men.68

The passage that holds the first image of the umbilical cord is significant for another reason. It is in the confrontation of Rosa with Clytie that the central conflict of the novel is revealed for the first time: the denial of racial brotherhood in the face of the undeniable realization that flesh is equal. The wider implication of the passage is that flesh is equal not only in terms of race and economic status, but in its capacity for evil. Rosa's terror and  

68 "The Umbilical Cord Symbol as Unifying Theme and Pattern in Absalom, Absalom!" Massachusetts Studies in English, 1 (1968), 106-110.
finally her despair upon being stopped by Clytie come not from her sense of outraged white supremacy, but from the bond she feels with Clytie, child of Sutpen, offspring of the "fell darkness" which Rosa identifies with Sutpen. This bond with the demonic has been expressed in theological terms as original sin. It is the bond of despair\textsuperscript{69} that equalizes all flesh. Clytie, by naming Rosa's name and touching her flesh\textsuperscript{70} pushes her into that abyss where, in the existentialist's

\textsuperscript{69}The meaning of "despair" here is not an emotion but a state. Paul Tillich defines despair as the recognition that man is both bound to himself, all other life, and the Ground of Being and separated from himself, all other life and the Ground of Being. In this state man is "separated and yet bound, estranged and yet belonging." (\textit{The Shaking of the Foundations} (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1949), p. 160). It is the state Kierkegaard has called the "sickness unto death," the state others have spoken of as being one of unlimited aspirations and hopes but of limited capabilities. In "The Hollow Men" T. S. Eliot expresses it thus:

\begin{quote}
Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{70}An emendation concerning the confrontation between Rosa and Clytie and two changes involving the word "flesh" are noteworthy. In the manuscript Rosa tells of crying out at Clytie's touch but not with words, "not because we did not have time to, not because we did not need to, but because we did not dare . . . ." The explanation quoted is left out of the published version. (\textit{MS}, p. 63, \textit{Absalom}, p. 116). Mention of Clytie's flesh being cold is left out of the finished novel (\textit{MS}, pp. 61, 62; \textit{Absalom}, pp. 139, 140) and a passage that reads in the manuscript "Clytie who in the very pigmentation of her skin represented that debacle which had brought Judith and me to what we were" reads "pigmentation of her flesh" in the novel. (\textit{MS}, p. 71, \textit{Absalom}, p. 156). "Flesh" has wider implications than "skin."
terms, no security of color or caste can be relied on, into that place where, in the Christian's terms, all are "naked before God," and where, in Rosa's Old Testament language, all are "touch and touch of that which is the citadel of the central I-Am's private own."71

Rosa resists her despairing recognition of the common denominator of all human flesh and her resistance comes in terms of race:

I crying not to her, to it; speaking to it through the negro, the woman, only because of the shock which was not yet outrage because it would be terror soon, expecting and receiving no answer because we both knew it was not to her I spoke: "Take your hand off me, nigger!"72

But the "cumulative over-reach of despair itself" forces the recognition that all men are flesh of one flesh:

I remember how as we stood there joined by that volitionless (yes: it too sentient victim just as she and I were) hand, I cried--perhaps not aloud, not with words (and not to Judith, mind: perhaps I knew already, on the instant I entered the house and saw that face which was at once both more and less than Sutpen, perhaps I knew even then what I could not, would not, must not believe)--I cried "And you too? And you too, sister, sister?"73

For a woman trained as Rosa had been to believe in her white supremacy, her moral righteousness, even her sexual superiority, what terror there must have been in such a confrontation with existential reality. She found herself "running from a terror in which [she could] not believe," i.e., the bond of despair, "toward a safety in which [she] had no faith," i.e., old codes, old dreams and aspirations. In her dilemma she rationalized: she denied her terror by saying that perhaps it is no lack of bravery or courage that causes one to avoid piercing the "arras-veil" that hangs between man and his despair ("that sickness

71P. 139. 72Pp. 139-140. 73P. 140.
somewhere at the prime foundation of the factual scheme"; perhaps "true wisdom" lies in staying in the world of illusion as long as possible. It is a world toward which the soul constantly struggles, a world in which death has not yet been accepted because the earth itself does not die, but continually renews itself. Denial of death and despair is only affirmation of hope and dream, and perhaps the latter is "more true than truth."

Rosa's plight is the plight of man. The forced acknowledgement of the commonality of flesh in death and despair has shaken more men than it has inspired. Only those who have known the power of the dream can know the crush of despair. Their question is not "Did I but dream?" Their question is "Why did I wake, since waking I shall never sleep again?" They know, too, that that which wakens is not something intellectual: it is physical, visceral, as the pain of a burning candle to the hand of a restless sleeper. The touch of Clytie's hand plunges Rosa into despair. The sound of Judith's voice on the stair stirs the old aspirations, the "might-have-been which is the single rock we cling to above the maelstrom of reality." But never again can the dream be innocent. The loss of innocence, too, has been resisted in terms of race. Clytie's "Don't you go up there, Rosa" is recognized by Rosa as a gesture made to one who is no longer a child, an acknowledgment of her adulthood, the cry of one creature to its fellow; but Rosa can only respond with a racial taunt--"Rosa? To me? To my face?--

71 Quoted passages in this paragraph are from pp. 142 and 143.
knowing all the while the emptiness of her reply. The world man has
built for himself is the world man clings to even when it lies in a
shambles about his feet.

The confrontation with Clytie at the door and the flight up the
stairs to Judith, who embodies Rosa's hopes, is an echo of Henry's
confrontation at the gate and his race up the stairs. In Rosa's
face-off, the focus is for the first time on the issue of racial
brotherhood. Racial scenes have been present—the barn fights, the
slave labor building the mansion and obeying the master; racial
attitudes have been evident—probing of the issue began with Compson's
analysis of Bon's morganatic marriage. But it is in Rosa's realization
of the undeniable equality of flesh that the crux of the novel is
stated. That it is an unwelcome realization vigorously resisted is
the source of conflict in the novel. The confrontation between the
"sisters" at the center of the book is symbolic of the confrontation
of the brothers that has just occurred, and it lays bare the cause
that brought the brothers into conflict. In the coming chapters
Henry's experience of brotherly love is revealed more fully as is his
resistance and denial. The result of his denial has already been
revealed. The cause is foreshadowed here in this central chapter. It
is also a foreshadowing of the anguish of Quentin Compson who has
visualized the confrontation at the end of the fourth chapter and the
race up the stairs at the end of this chapter. The awareness of and
flight from reality to dream is an intellectual one for Quentin. But
for Henry and Rosa, it is physical, flesh to flesh.
Rosa's confrontation with Clytie is one episode of the chapter. The organization of the whole chapter is in and of itself a journey to, a sojourn at, and a return from Sutpen's Hundred, being thus a capsule quest in the midst of a more extended quest. In addition, Rosa tells of still another trip to Sutpen's Hundred in the midst of recounting this one. It was a journey of hope as this one is a journey of despair. The journey of innocence is engulfed in the journey of experience. The quest in 1865 as in 1860 and in 1910 is actual at the same time that it is metaphysical. Rosa covers the ground between Jefferson and Sutpen's Hundred in her buggy; she participates in death and life at the mansion on a physical level; she returns again over the same ground. The physical details are there; but her journey is also a journey into essence, into qualitative as well as quantitative experience. She continually raises questions of being at a time when she and Judith and Clytie must spend every waking moment in an effort to keep their bodies alive. The chapter thus is a multi-level quest; and in the modern mode, it is an inquiry that does not reveal answers but points to the questions of life. In Hyatt Waggoner's view, Faulkner reshapes experience so that primordial questions, deadened by recent culture, are raised again.\textsuperscript{75}

The question of the relationship of body and soul is one that is raised. For Rosa there is that deep existence where life moves without

\textsuperscript{75}From Jefferson to the World, p. 251.
waiting for the clumsy appendages to catch up. Rosa's being stops at
Clytie's voice while her body continues in its path to the stairs. There
is also that level of existence that is solely physical. In the funeral
procession, her body goes through the motions of the ceremony, but
extraphysical belief is not present. The three women carry on physical
activity without spirit, without inspiration; they exist "in an apathy
which is almost peace, like that of the blind unsentient earth itself
which dreams after no flower's stalk nor bud, envies not the airy
musical solitude of the springing leaves it nourishes." Rosa con-
cludes that the muscles and the tear ducts are the sum of existence.
Her conclusion is an echo of Bon's letter because Bon had come to the
belief that the body endures, struggles, even though the soul dies, that
immortality is of flesh and not of spirit. On the other hand, Rosa
recognized that Sutpen's body was an empty shell but that his "indomitable
iron spirit" existed in spite of the flagging old man's flesh. In one
respect, the body's needs and desires and the touch of flesh with flesh
betray the ideals and aspirations of the soul. From another standpoint,
man's hopes and dreams keep the body going. On the one hand, Rosa lived
on in body long after her principles and hopes had been destroyed, and,
on the other hand, Sutpen's grand design died with his body. The
question Rosa raises coincides with Bon's: is the nature of existence
physical or spiritual?

The nature of time is also probed in this chapter. Time becomes
one with existence rather than the backdrop of existence. The journey

76p. 155.
in 1865 becomes one with past events: "I traversed those same twelve miles once more after the two years since Ellen died (or was it the four years since Henry vanished or was it the nineteen years since I saw light and breathed?) ..." Ellen's death, Henry's disappearance, and Rosa's birth, though occurrences in sequential time, permeate the present moment. The arrival at Sutpen's Hundred becomes one with both past and future since Rosa finds that she has arrived too soon and too late. She would have been late if she had been present at Judith's birth, a presence chronologically impossible, and she was too soon because the house itself seemed reserved for some desolation yet to come. The present moment is the sum and the receptacle of the past and the future.

Two images in this chapter give further dimension to the nature of time. The "summer of wistaria," the interlude in which Rosa details a sojourn at Sutpen's Hundred in 1860, fuses with the "twice-bloomed wistaria" of Rosa's old-maid quarters and with the "summer of wistaria" in which Compson begins his narration. The interlude is a mythic expression of the universal longing for ideal love in which the dreamer is both the lover and the beloved. For several reasons, the aura of romance and youth that it should create is missing. First, it is juxtaposed to the account of Bon's funeral, thus emphasizing the crushing journey from innocence to despair. Second, it is also associated with the first chapter and Rosa's old-maid outrage and frustration, an association that shadows the idealism of the Edenic...
Finally, it is associated with Compson's story and his attitudes, and these, too, qualify the meaning of the idyllic time. Thus, the account, while literally a description of a young girl’s lyrical attitude toward love, is permeated with the adult's knowledge of frustration and despair, and the summer of youth becomes one with the winter of discontent. The moment in time becomes the timeless moment.

Another image used reflexively defines time in spatial terms. Bon, in his letter in the preceding chapter, noted that war was but an echo of the first shot. Quentin, in the first chapter, was described as an "empty hall echoing with" ghosts. Rosa believes all life to be an echo of the shot that killed Bon, and there are implications—"I have come too soon"—that even that shot is an echo: thus, life is not event, but echo, reverberation, "the tedious repercussive anticlimax." Through the use of the echo image, literal meaning reinforces thematic meaning and technical structure. Material is arranged so that it echoes itself, and the echo image simply underscores the effect. Specifically, in this chapter, Quentin's recreation of the scene in Judith's bedroom

76 John Hagan interprets the wisteria images in a different way. Because Rosa smelled the wisteria in 1909, she remembered the summer of 1860. The memory was so powerful that she had to tell her story and she had to go to the mansion. Memory for her is "mindless compulsiveness," a "conditioned response." He supports his interpretation by quoting her attitude toward remembering. "That is the substance of remembering—sense, sight, smell: the muscles with which we see and hear and feel—not mind, not thought . . . the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for: no more, no less . . ." (p. 143). "Déjà vu and the Effect of Timelessness," p. 144.

79 P. 156.
at the very end of the chapter is an echo of Rosa's description of it at the first of the chapter. The use of echo, both figuratively and technically, gives events and episodes the quality of timelessness.80

For Walter Slatoff, the chapter exemplifies Faulkner's habit of presenting life in terms of "conceptual antitheses." He finds the following thematic poles in Rosa's narration: reality and dream, mind and body, heart and brain, "oblivion and consciousness," "oblivion and memory," "timelessness and transience," "immobility and change." He concludes that Faulkner often "unites thematic poles into conditions in which they can neither be separated or reconciled."81

One of the best examples of this thesis may be found in the character Clytie. While she is a participant in the Sutpen story, she is also presented in this chapter as a representative of the forces that destroyed the Sutpens, a symbol of the "inexplicable unseen." She is spoken of as living in and antedating time. On the one hand, she is a creature of myth and legend; on the other, she is an actual being. She is described with both masculine and feminine adjectives, shown doing masculine as well as feminine work. She is both black and white, slave and free. Embodied in her character, as in the chapter, is the central conflict of the novel, one that is expressive of man's conflict

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80 One interesting revision that Faulkner made in this chapter had to do with images. In the manuscript Rosa is working in a row of mustard when Sutpen appears to look at her as if the light had just dawned for him. In the novel she is working in an okra bed. MS, p. 75, Absalom, p. 163.

81 Quest for Failure, pp. 99-102.
with the nature of being, his readiness to deny what is not a part of his dream. Like other characters, she appears in early descriptions to be an abstraction rather than a flesh and blood being, but before the novel is done an uneasy union of abstraction and body occurs.

Thematic poles and questions of being represent the metaphysical side of Rosa's quest, but there is a literal quest, too, and the chapter raises questions about matters in the Sutpen story as well as questions of a universal nature. Details of Sutpen's death are revealed for the first time. It is learned that Wash Jones presided over Sutpen's fate and that the "stroke of a rusty scythe" was the means of death. These revelations are factual but not meaningful, effect but not cause; thus they open the door for further exploration and elaboration. The question of Rosa's broken engagement is also left suspended. And the chapter concludes with the matter of something hidden in the old house.

The chapter is Rosa's last. Her insistence that she did not become engaged to Sutpen for revenge, and that she did forgive him for insulting her is, as she has said, not the way the story is told by "they." The voices of "they" are the more powerful voices, and both Compson in earlier chapters and Shreve in later chapters reinforce them. Nevertheless, her proximity to events makes her an authoritative voice, and her judgment of events brushes on colors that are not easily removed.
CHAPTER IV

THE MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTERS

With the beginning of Chapter VI, the setting of the novel shifts from dusty summer to iron-cold winter, from Mississippi parlor and gallery to a Harvard dormitory room. The point of view shifts from the personal memories of local people to the interrogations and responses of two youths removed from the local scene, one a complete stranger with a lively interest and imagination. The subject matter shifts from an emphasis on life in Jefferson as it related to Sutpen and Sutpen's Hundred prior to the Civil War to an emphasis on the years after and the years prior to his building an estate. Jeffersonians are no longer central to the novel: the Rosa who is alive and prominent in the Mississippi chapters is known to be dead as the story of the Sutpens' former and later years unfolds; Shreve from Canada and Harvard, Etienne from New Orleans, Sutpen from Virginia and Haiti, Bon from Haiti and New Orleans—all take their turns at center stage. Quentin's removal from his native land, Rosa's death, and the introduction of "outsiders" force the reader to look from a new perspective, a perspective interpreted in various ways by critics, a view that makes the picture created by the Mississippi chapters seem lopsided. The structure of this section suggests that distance and death serve as correctives to interpretation, and the structure of the individual chapters is appropriate to the subject matter.
The effect of the shifts that occur between Chapters V and VI have been commented on by critical readers. Waggener notes the movement in perspective from the closeness of Rosa to the distance of Shreve, a distance he views as having been achieved by Shreve's exaggeration and ironic comments.¹ Poirier speaks of the movement of the novel at this point as being a movement from sources to interpretation, from rejection of old views to creation of a new view, saying Quentin rejects his father's and Rosa's view of Bon as a naturalistic creature or an "impersonal mechanism" or Fate.² Vickery calls attention to the qualities of the narration in the second half that are different from the earlier chapters: whereas Rosa fantasizes, proclaims a curse in Gothic terms, and Compson intellectualizes in tragic terms, Shreve and Quentin are romantic, poetic, allusive, even idealistic, though Shreve can see honor and love, courage and loyalty where Quentin can see only incest, miscegenation, and destruction.³ Bradford sees the structure of the Massachusetts chapters in terms of Quentin's relation to Henry: Henry's act in murdering Bon is an act Quentin could not have performed. The willingness of both Sutpen and Henry to act upon their convictions is, in Bradford's view, an accusation against Quentin. "The total pattern of Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, may be said to have conspired to bring Quentin face-to-face once more with the measure of his own

¹From Jefferson to the World, pp. 156, 158.
³The Novels, pp. 87-92.
weakness. Bradford pursues in his comments the line of thought common to Faulkner criticism: Faulkner traces in his work the movement in Southern history from a vibrant, courageous generation in the early South to a contemporary generation of weakened, passive, uninspired people. The cruelties and injustices of the old way of life were at least balanced by heroic deeds and struggles, but the descendants of heroes can only wallow in despair.

The traditional and legendary picture created by the Mississippi chapters is turned awry in the Massachusetts chapters. The heroic planter described by Compson is juxtaposed by Quentin and Shreve to his own cruel actions and to the injustices of his society. Sutpen is seen to have fallen because racial prejudice rotted away the core of his being. The demonic in-law portrayed by Rosa is seen no longer as a powerful alien force come to wreak undeserved havoc on a fated family, but as an internal force working a purposeful judgment on a society based on racial distinctions. The fury of the fall and the destructive nature of the judgmental force are predicated upon the larger-than-life characterization of Sutpen by Compson and Rosa, but they are also derived from these narrators' own professions of racial prejudice. The attitude of Sutpen toward his part black son is an attitude professed by Rosa in

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1 "Brother, Son, and Heir," pp. 67-94.

5 The novel also portrays economic and sexual distinctions. Rosa is as guilty as Sutpen of dehumanizing Wash for economic reasons, and she abuses men by despising them as Sutpen abuses women by using them. The central barrier to human brotherhood in the novel, however, is race, inasmuch as it is race that sets Sutpen on his determined course, and race that causes the death of Bon.
her encounter with Clytie (Chapter V) and by Compson in his dispassionate contemplation of the morganatic marriage (Chapter IV). Both deny racial brotherhood in words if not in deeds: it is thus ironic that they look upon Sutpen as an outsider when he only mirrors and exaggerates their own attitudes. The tornadic lives of Sutpen and his descendants are seen in the Massachusetts chapters to be neither alien nor haphazard but organic and purposeful. The cyclone of racial prejudice whirs in its destructive path, and when it blows itself out, all that remains is the benign Jim Bond, a creature totally unaware of racial distinctions between men. The fury of the storm may be measured by its effect upon Quentin, who lies quivering in distress at the end of the novel. Shreve, in his last remarks, sums up the destruction wrought and promises or prophesies that in time there will be no more racial distinctions; in the future all men will be the sons of Jim Bond. However, the promise of the future remains in the hands of the debilitated victim of the storm and in the course taken by the idiot spawned by its winds. The reader must decide whether the victim will recover and whether the offspring will remain immune to racial barriers to brotherhood.

The different perspective created in the Massachusetts chapters by new setting, point of view, subject matter, characters, and tone is also affected by the use of the letter announcing the death of Rosa. Citations of portions of this letter occur at both the beginning and the end of these chapters, and the knowledge of Rosa's death may be said to negate Rosa's influential interpretation of men and events. Faulkner
has said in at least one place that the heroic grandeur of the Old South has been kept alive by maiden and widowed aunts. It would follow that only when they are gone can the real picture take shape. The arrangement of material in this section certainly suggests that with the death of Rosa, a more accurate picture emerges. Death, as well as distance, gives perspective.

The four chapters framed by the letter may be seen as spiritual biographies of Sutpen and his Bon descendants and the responses of the four to their Southern situation; there is total rebellion on the part of Etienne in Chapter VI, determined adaptation on the part of Sutpen in Chapter VII, casually attempted change on the part of Bon in Chapter VIII, and complete and passive acceptance on the part of Bond in Chapter IX. The structure for the chapters is appropriate. There is a whirlpool effect in the structure of the sixth chapter with Etienne in the center and concentric layers of time swirling around him. In the seventh chapter layers of time are both concurrent and merging, the strands of Sutpen's life catching up with each other, merging, and moving on in tandem with other strands. The eighth chapter is a quest, with Bon being willing to seek cause and explanation, not accepting the way things are but seeking to make them different, neither adapting to them nor rebelling against them, just probing them. Chapter IX with its alternations of hope and despair strikes an equilibrium of sorts, a tension between past and present, between the racially inspired Henry and the racially ignorant Bond—an equilibrium-tension out of which the reader must decide whether Shreve's hopeful promise or Quentin's woeful despair is the wave of the future.
Analysis of Chapter VII:

Charles Etienne St. Valery Bon: Revery

In Chapter VI several principles of organization overlap. On the psychological level there is the consciousness of Quentin Compson that guides the direction of the material. On the historical level there are three concentric layers of time. On the symbolic level there is the evocation of futility and despair. In all three instances the focus is on the life and death of Charles Etienne St. Valery Bon.

Quentin in his Harvard room is moved to revery by a letter from his father and by the questions of his roommate, Shrevlin McCannon. He reads part of his father's letter, is asked about the South, remembers the trip to Sutpen's Hundred with Rosa, listens to Shreve recapitulate first Rosa's life and then Sutpen's life, and then himself recapitulates Sutpen's latter days and death, envisioning the life after death of Sutpen and Wash Jones. Then Quentin is reminded by Shreve of a visit to the Sutpen cemetery during which Quentin's father discussed with him the history of the Sutpen tombstones and told of an aunt and her worry about her burial dress, of the octoroon's visit to Charles Bon's grave, and of the life and death of Bon's son. Quentin envisions Bon's son and Judith in conversation; reflects again on the history of the tombstones, recalling Rosa's financial state and the role Judge Benbow played in it; hears Shreve repeat a tale of the haunted Sutpen mansion and one of Quentin's own childhood visits there at which time he discovered Clytie and Jim Bond; hears Shreve review Luster's fear of the place and his knowledge of Jim Bond; then is halted by Shreve before he can reveal the mystery of the decaying mansion.
The direction of Quentin's revery is backward and outward. Periods of time enclose each other in concentric circles so that the chapter begins and ends in the present, is centrally focused on the distant past, and has an intermediate interest in the recent past. The innermost circle is the story of Charles Etienne Bon. The intermediate circle is Quentin's remembrance and recreation of episodes near the old mansion during his childhood and youth. The outermost circle is the scene in the Harvard room. While moving backward and then forward again in time, the revery is also moving outward in terms of setting, point of view, cast of characters, allusions, and tone.

In the first half of the novel there has been the backward and inward looking of three native Southerners. Now, through the expansion of setting and cast, these turnings must be subjected to the scrutiny of an alien with more objective attitudes toward the South. The setting of the frame story shifts from Jefferson, Mississippi to Cambridge, Massachusetts, from September, 1909 to January, 1910, from the heat and dust of summer to the cold and snow of winter. The voice demanding that the story be told shifts from Rosa, the bard of the Old South, to Shreve, the interrogator from the Canadian North. The setting for the internal story shifts to include not only the once grand mansion but also the decaying remains and environs—the fields and cabins, the store and cemetery. The cast of characters expands to focus not only on the Sutpen men but also on the women and children, especially the child of Charles Bon. He, too, is an alien whose very presence raises questions about the Southern way of life. His heritage is a reproach to his kinswomen,
an affront to his community, and a source of uneasiness to those who try to help him. The anguished responses to his presence are italicized, calling attention to the plight of the South, not to his inner conflict.

The present and the distant past merge in Quentin's childhood visit to the old house and his youthful trip to the cemetery. To this intermediate time, too, are added new characters, first Luster, who, in turn, reveals the name of Jim Bond. Jim Bond, link between past and present, alien by means of his feeble-mindedness, is a reproach to the South in a manner opposite that of his father. Charles Etienne Bon was so painfully aware of his black blood that he could live only in continual rebellion. Jim Bond is so completely unaware of any distinctions based on blood that attempts to demean him on a racial basis are futile. The cast of characters added to the chapter brings into sharper focus the central issue of the novel—racial brotherhood. Shreve is aware that racial distinctions are made, but their irrelevance to him is obvious in his continued reference to Rosa as Aunt Rosa, a reference that disturbs the race-conscious Quentin. Jim Bond makes racial distinctions meaningless: as Vickery points out, he does not know his color or the color of others; thus, he is free from racial prejudice or consciousness. And Charles Etienne Bon shakes the very structure of racial discrimination so that all who deal with him must face the issue.

In addition to the expanded setting in time and space and the new characters, the scope of the novel is broadened through allusion and

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\(^6\) The Novels, p. 120.
There have already been numerous allusions, but this chapter is replete with new ones, due in part to Shreve's narration. Allusions are of varying kinds, drawn from classical mythology, Christian theology and mythology, and schools of art and literature. The chapter begins with a description of the vanishing snow on Shreve's sleeve, an ironic allusion to the snows of yesteryear, ironic in that yesteryear has by no means vanished for Quentin.® Hamlet, Agamemnon, Cassandra, Pyramus and Thisbe, "Caesar's laurel," Faustus, and Beelzebub come from the classical tradition; Ham, gall and wormwood, and Gethsemane come from the Christian tradition; Wilde, Beardsley, Creditor, Valery,® and the name of Charles Étienne St. Valéry Bon may or may not be an allusion to the French symbolist Paul Valéry, but it is significant that Charles is discovered to have been hiding a piece of a mirror in his room and the poet is reputed to have studied himself for his own sake, to have believed that two of his subjects—the real da Vinci and the created Teste—were symbols of the human consciousness turned in upon itself. Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1931), p. 67.

It has been said by Harold Edward Richardson that Faulkner was kin to the French symbolists in his "intuitional perception" and that a number of his poems reflected "techniques and philosophical attitudes of the decadents and French symbolists, especially Paul Verlaine." The Journey to Self-Discovery, pp. 96-97, 139.

The meaning in this first passage is enlarged by ambiguity as well as by allusion. The participle "vanishing" is syntactically displaced so that it may modify either "snow," "cold," or "hand."

There was snow on Shreve's overcoat sleeve, his ungloved blond square hand red and raw with cold, vanishing. P. 173.

The manuscript version reads

There was no snow on Shreve's ungloved square blond hand red and raw from the cold, going away, vanishing. . . . P. 80.

The name of Charles Etienne St. Valéry Bon may or may not be an allusion to the French symbolist Paul Valéry, but it is significant that Charles is discovered to have been hiding a piece of a mirror in his room and the poet is reputed to have studied himself for his own sake, to have believed that two of his subjects—the real da Vinci and the created Teste—were symbols of the human consciousness turned in upon itself. Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1931), p. 67.

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The Journey to Self-Discovery, pp. 96-97, 139.
wasteland's "knew it all already" are out of the modern tradition.
In addition to these literary allusions, the reader is reminded several
times of Faulkner's own work, most obviously *The Sound and the Fury*
through Quentin at Harvard and Luster, the Compson family servant.
Charles Etienne Bon is another version of Joe Christmas; the bizarre
funeral journey of Sutpen is like that of Addie Bundren; and the
mythic description of the mules that Bon follows as he plows is similar
to references to these beasts in other Faulkner stories. The whole
body of Faulkner's previous work becomes part of this novel.

In tone, the chapter adds the flippant and the humorous. Shreve's
"all right, all right, all right" cuts into the haunted, romantic,
subjective attitudes of the previous chapters and of Quentin's in this
chapter. Compson's story of an aunt who feared being buried in a hated
dress and his teasing the black Luster about avoiding the cemetery and
the old house add humor at the same time that they reveal sexist and
racist attitudes. The revelation of the contents of Judge Benbow's file
on the estate of Goodhue Coldfield adds a light touch at the same time
that it makes a mockery of the moral righteousness of Coldfield and his
daughter.

The wide range of material gathered into this chapter would seem to
make it loose and chaotic. Quentin's consciousness is difficult to
follow. Unity does not come from sequence or focus, from setting or
point of view. Nor does it come from resolution: even Rosa's letter
is not read into the record in its entirety. The mystery at the old
house is not cleared up, though it is revealed that Quentin knows what
it is. The story of Charles Etienne Bon is complete; but its pertinence is not clear, placed as it is between the anecdote about the aunt’s dress and the one about Rosa’s financial situation. The story is the core of the chapter; and like its subject in the fight at the Negro cabin, it lashes out across the rest of the material in the chapter, material that churns chaotically about it; but also like Charles, its intensity seems to produce only questions, not resolution. If Faulkner intended the reader to be confused after this chapter, to feel the frustration of a Charles Etienne Bon or a Quentin Compson, then the ordering of material according to a haunted young man’s memories served his purpose.

However, while the scope of the chapter is broad and inclusive and seemingly chaotic, it at the same time creates a central feeling—the futility of human conflict and discrimination. Whereas Rosa in her chapter made a statement of her despair in both abstract and concrete terms, Quentin in his reverie only suggests despair through the images and concerns in his listening and remembering. Rosa expressly named Clytie as the symbol of her despair, but Quentin only vaguely apprehends that Bon is the symbol of his despair. The method of suggesting a symbol rather than stating it is a method of the symbolist. The intimation of a feeling rather than a statement of it is also a characteristic of the symbolist poets. The material brought to the surface of

9In the manuscript, Bon created the disturbance that led him to the courtroom in a Negro church during a social rather than in a cabin at a dice game. M3, pp. 93, 95; Absalom, pp. 202, 205.

10Wilson, pp. 20-21.
Quentin's consciousness in this chapter creates in symbolist fashion a feeling of futility. The objects that guide Quentin's revery, the images in the surrealistic scenes, the attitudes toward and the subject matter of the recapitulations and anecdotes, and the characterization of Judith and Clytie in the core story, all create the sense of futility and despair.

It is an announcement of death that triggers the revery and recapitulation. Then a mention of a tombstone jogs Quentin's memories of other tombstones which in turn call forth the stories of the names on the stones. Graveyard scenes, funerals, instructions for and payments on tombstones—these images of death are the inspiration and guide for Quentin's listening and remembering.

In his revery, he treats several episodes imaginatively, creating surrealistic scenes with evocative images. The buggy in which he traveled to Sutpen's Hundred with Rosa moved in a cloud of dust which seemed to have materialized around it, a cloud that warned there would be nothing to find at the old mansion, since the dust had been there already, since what is should be left alone. Quentin imagines Wash and Sutpen in afterlife serenely talking, but not knowing what it was that had passed between them in life except that at times a

"wind, a shadow" would arise and give them pause. Quentin's description of the rain-washed graveyard, the dogs drifting in like smoke, indistinguishable from each other as they group together for warmth, the one acting human in its curiosity, the reader knowing that it could not matter to a dog, is a haunting piece of surrealism. Natural objects, the sedge and the trees, dissolve into the rain; the dogs merge with the sedge, becoming invisible; the gloom is lit by raindrops that look like "not-quite congealed meltings from cold candles." The scene suggests a unity of things that makes conflict seem far away and unimportant. Quentin envisions the journey of the monuments that Sutpen ordered for himself and Ellen and pictures a solitary ship in the night watched for by hungry men with glaring eyes and a loaded wagon slowing down cold and battle-weary men, the urgently needed space in both ship and wagon being displaced by inert stone. He sees one of the monuments standing in the hall of Sutpen's hundred, an object of death creating romantic dreams in the breast.

P. 186-187. Langford does not feel that this passage is effective: "Quentin's imagined scene of Sutpen and Jones in the next world could be said to reflect his yearning for tranquility as the aftermath of Sutpen's fevered struggle, but to suggest that Sutpen's life-long inhumanity and Jones's righteous indignation are not of lasting significance seems to contradict the basic point of the tragic story Quentin is reconstructing." (Collation, p. 34). It might also be said that the reconciliation of Sutpen and Jones is an indication on one hand of the transience of all things and, on the other hand, of the futility of righteous indignation and inhumanity.

P. 188.
of the love-starved Rosa. Quentin also visualizes a scene between Judith and Charles Etienne in which she tries in vain to free him from his drop of tainted blood, unwittingly denying his being while extending the help of her name and race. Three images in the vision, by suggesting the transitory nature of existence, counterbalance the seriousness with which Judith, according to Quentin, views the problem of blood: "straws in a gale," "sound of the lamp's flame," and "animal .. in that light incorrigibility of the free which would leave not even a print on the earth which lightly bore it." In creating the scene, Quentin expresses the same values as his grandfather had expressed in his dealings with Charles Etienne Bon. The grandfather, too, had told Bon to escape his heritage and create a new life for himself. The efforts of both the Judith in Quentin's vision and the grandfather were futile.

In the recapitulations of the lives of Rosa and Sutpen early in the chapter, a sense of futility is evoked both through Shreve's attitude toward and the content of these recreations. Shreve's review of Rosa's story is so casual that the reader who has just heard Rosa reveal the depths of her despair and her unbelief is led to wonder whether her anguish was, after all, important. Shreve's irreverent attitude and his distortions suggest the futility of passionate
self-defense. He speaks of her insult in animalistic terms and accuses her of nonforgiveness, even though the reader has just heard her say that there was nothing to forgive. The details that both Shreve and Quentin add to Sutpen's story are of a sordid nature. The man who once held dominion over vast lands is reduced to haggling over nickels and dimes, has seduced a fifteen-year-old girl, and often has to be carried home in a drunken stupor. His brutal treatment of Wash's granddaughter incites Wash to kill him. Judith's attempt to give him a church burial turns grotesque. The grand design comes at last to nothing.

A sense of futility also pervades the apparently unrelated anecdotes. The aunt who went to painful lengths to rid herself of a hated dress need not have bothered, since she outlived the cousin who would have buried her in it. The racing forms and betting tickets in Judge Benbow's file on the Coldfields, indicating that Rosa's expenses had been underwritten by gambling, undercut her lifelong assertions of the moral uprightness of her family. Pretensions to pride and principle are mocked.

The central story both begins and ends with a tombstone. While Clytie is in New Orleans making arrangements to remove Charles Etienne Bon to Sutpen's Hundred, Judith presents Quentin's grandfather with instructions for and a downpayment on a tombstone for Bon. After the death of Judith and Bon, Clytie saves money for twelve years to finish paying for it. In the relationship between the two women and their nephew, thematic lines are drawn. Just what that relation is is subject
to speculation, the townspeople surmising that he is Judith's son, General Compson believing at one point that he is Clytie's son by Sutpen. It is known that both women try to protect him, Judith from legal action, Clytie from passersby. Judith gives him the bed she would have given a son. Clytie dresses him in the garment of the Negro. Judith's attitude toward him is portrayed as calm and cool, while Clytie's is fierce and physical. Judith gives her life for him and Clytie raises his son. Just what dreams or fears he arouses in his aunts can only be surmised. Quentin and his father believe they wanted to save him from his tainted blood, save him from himself. Perhaps the Compsons are right. The women's interest in a monument suggests they knew that only in death would he be free from the burden not only of racial but also of human despair.

Bon's suicidal actions also suggest a longing for death and release. The implication thematically is that racial conflict can only be destructive. The theme is qualified by the fact that Bon did not commit suicide, but instead died of disease after a period of quiet and patient farming, a period in which he ostensibly accepted his lot in life. The futility of rebellion and the futility of acceptance are apparent. Everything comes to naught.

The pall of death that hangs over the chapter through image, attitude, and story reduces the passions and players of yesteryear to monuments in the country graveyard and arouses a tension and uneasiness
Some other revisions in the chapter are noteworthy. Sutpen, after being brought home drunk, is said in the manuscript to have been put to bed, but in the novel he is said to have been put to bed "like a baby." He is said in the manuscript to have stood over Milly's pallet with the riding whip in his hand before speaking to her, but in the novel he is seen standing over her pallet with the whip, looking "down at the mother and child." (MS, pp. 86, 87; Absalom, pp. 184, 185). The aura of innocence that these additions might have created is dispelled by the sordidness of the situations described. The pattern wherein innocence is engulfed by knowledge, despair, and futility is once again repeated.

Another revision has to do with the nature of the disease from which Judith and Charles Etienne Bon died. In the manuscript it is smallpox; in the novel it is yellow fever. The word "smallpox" is used twice in the manuscript, while "yellow fever" is used only once and "disease" once in the novel. "Smallpox" is retained in the chronology. Arlyn Bruccoli's thesis (in an unpublished master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1959, cited by Millgate, Achievement, p. 323) is that Faulkner used the chronology to correct an error in the novel, the correction being made because smallpox is contagious and yellow fever is not. The evidence of the manuscript makes Bruccoli's thesis doubtful. More damaging evidence, however, is the fact that a yellow fever epidemic occurred in Oxford, Mississippi in 1888, according to a history of the Daughters of the American Revolution carried in The Oxford Eagle, August 21, 1972, p. 7A. This factual information suggests that Faulkner had difficulty remembering the nature of the epidemic and sometimes recalled "smallpox" rather than "yellow fever." That Faulkner was concerned about factual accuracy in his chronology must surely be questioned.

Analysis of Chapter VII:

Thomas Sutpen: Juxtaposition

Because Sutpen is considered the central character of the novel and because Chapter VII delineates his life, the chapter has been more closely scrutinized by critics than most of the others. Sutpen's innocence and his design have been the focus of numerous discussions and the morality of the South and the rationality of modern man have emerged as thematic qualities of the novel because of the implications of Sutpen's
life as expressed in this chapter. The Compsons' view—grandfather, father, and son—of Sutpen has been trusted more often than Rosa's view of him, more critics placing their faith in so-called rational men than in the passionate woman, even while they condemn cold logic and reason and uphold the virtues of passion and emotion, even while they point out that Faulkner usually relies on blacks, women, and children for those enduring qualities of the human spirit.

This chapter, like the last, has three levels of time; only here they are concurrent rather than concentric. In the beginning of the chapter there are the present, the early Mississippi past, and the Virginia past. After the Virginia cycle of the story catches up with the Mississippi cycle, a later Mississippi past is added. It, too, is caught up with, and the story of Wash that concludes the

17 Two analyses of the time scheme for this chapter follow: J. F. Stewart in a discussion of "Wash" speaks of the "cinematic manipulation of time" in this chapter. There is (1) the present scene, (2) the years from 1861-65, (3) the years from 1865-69, and finally (4) a Sunday in 1869, the day of Wash's insurrection and apocalypse. There is a "cyclic rather than lineal time sequence." Apotheosis and Apocalypse in Faulkner's "Wash," Studies in Short Fiction, 6 (Fall 1969), 586.

Karl Zink looks at the time scheme in the account of Sutpen's trip down the mountain. He describes it as not a sequence of events but a succession of impressions—a suspension in a dreamlike state, in "destinationless locomotion." The reality in the account comes from the paralleling of "external flow of event and internal flow of consciousness": man lives in sequential time, but he experiences out of sequential time and in the Time of Consciousness. This concept serves as the framework for Sutpen's description of his journey. "Flux and the Frozen Moment: The Imagery of Stasis in Faulkner's Prose," MLA, 71 (June 1956), 294-301.
chapter is intermingled only with the present. At the end of the chapter, Shreve pulls all the eras of Sutpen’s life together in the statement that all Sutpen had wanted was a son, and Quentin makes a judgment on that life by revealing that Milly’s child was a girl.

Quentin’s consciousness and Shreve’s probing, while present, are not controlling factors in this chapter as they were in the last. The story of Sutpen’s life and the circumstances under which it was first revealed, as well as the circumstances under which it is being retold, are the controlling factors. On one level, there is the Sutpen story; then there is Sutpen telling the Sutpen story; and then there is Quentin telling the Sutpen story as told to him by his father and grandfather. From one standpoint, the principle of organization for the chapter is biographical. The chapter chronicles the life of Thomas Sutpen from boyhood in a mountain home to death in a Mississippi river bottom, taking the reader through his descent onto the Tidewater plain.

18 The story of Wash is drawn from Faulkner’s published short story “Wash.” The use of it in this novel is the subject for comment by Neil D. Isaacs and J. F. Stewart. Isaacs calls “Wash” a “cameo,” “an emblem,” “a prototype” of the novel. Wash, like Quentin, drinks the bitter cup of disillusionment; both are “reluctant perceivers of the changing order.” "Götterdämmerung in Yoknapatawpha," Tennessee Studies in Literature, 8 (1963), 51-55.

Stewart calls the story a "concentrated parable of Southern degeneracy in the aftermath of the Civil War. The protagonists are sharply contrasted against a regional, historical, social, and cosmic background. Their movement from interdependence to conflict symbolizes the breakup of a feudal system; it is also a movement from mythical past to grim present." Stewart’s judgment, like Isaacs’s, is that the story is both social and personal: there is in it the defeat and the decadence of the South and the movement from illusion to disillusion of a man. "Apotheosis," pp. 588, 600.
his discovery of race and class, his determination to make his fortune in the West Indies in order to compete with the planter class, his heroism and engagement in the West Indies, his rise to power and fortune in Mississippi, his loss of empire, and his desperate attempt to rebuild it on the back of Wash Jones. The chapter has autobiographical qualities, since Sutpen tells part of the story himself, the circumstances under which he ponders it being two: the hunt for the architect before Sutpen's Hundred is finished and the visit to General Compson's office just before the collapse of his empire is accomplished by the murder of Ben. The chapter is also historical, since the circumstances under which Quentin revives it are Shreve's desire to know about the South and his own "sullen bemusement" in regard to his native soil.

Other principles of organization may be found in this chapter: cause to effect, mythical quest, juxtaposition or counterpoint, and cumulation of images. The most interesting of these for several reasons is cause to effect, first of all because it is unique. Thus far in the novel, effect has come before cause, but in the story of Sutpen's early life and in the story of his relationship to Wash Jones, a logical progression is followed with no interruptions except an occasional word or phrase by Shreve. The death of Sutpen's mother causes the family to leave the mountains. The symbolic "monkey nigger" causes Sutpen to formulate a plan. The accidental schooling causes him to head for the West Indies. In addition to cause-and-effect sequences contained within the chapter, there are revealed causes of hitherto mysterious effects,
revelations that make the chapter more enlightening than others have been. The origin of Charles Bon is the most notable example. Also, the modern reader is relieved to know that the cause of Sutpen's failure can be attributed to his environment, it being easier to say that a man is a monster because he lives under a monstrous system than to say he is a monster because he came from the nether regions, as Rosa said. The chapter thus brings relief and explanation. The logical structure is suitable for delineating the life of a man governed by the desire to rationalize and justify, a man dedicated to a plan. The technique serves the story.

However, the logical progression has its interruptions, and the chapter is not basically organized in a logical pattern. The biography of Sutpen flashes backward and forward in time, the hunt and the office visit being out of logical sequence; and the recapitulation is sometimes abstract, as when Sutpen defends his action in regard to his first wife, sometimes impressionistic as when the reader gets tantalizing glimpses of scenes in Haiti but no satisfactory account of Sutpen's life there. In spite of the clarity and order of the accounts of his boyhood in Virginia and his adulthood in Mississippi, the reader is as "fog-bound" about the crucial event in Haiti as Sutpen is. The focus on Sutpen's clouded concept of morality is aided by the structural technique. Sutpen can not understand his mistake, and the reader is not allowed to view clearly the scene of his error.

19Absalom, p. 271.
Though not the basic organizing principle of this chapter, the mythic element that is present should be reviewed. In the midst of the hunt, the storyteller relates the story of man: the primitive man falling into civilization, suffering rejection, and setting off to search for meaning and immortality. Many years later, in the midst of the battle, the civilized man pauses in the offices of justice to defend his behavior and his accomplishments, saying he only wanted to free nameless boys from "brutehood." His quest blunted, he once more sets about searching for immortality in a manner that degrades both natural and social laws, and he dies at last by the rusty scythe, his quest ironically accomplished. After he is gone, other storytellers in the land repeat the tale of his fall. The myth of man is also the myth of nation. With Scottish ancestry on the maternal side and English outcasts on the paternal side, the man is a symbol of the downtrodden and of cultural assimilation. In the course of his journey to adulthood, he sheds the buckskins of his pioneering stage and acquires the habit of rational thought and the dreams of empire from his brief association with the one-room school. He participates in the nation's war, and he dies at the hands of a slayer whose name ironically combines the two classes of American life to which he had belonged—the aristocratic Washington and the common Jones—as if the very nation itself turned upon and rid itself of the symbol of rejection, a man who betrayed his heritage.

20 P. 261.
That Faulkner intentionally employed myth is evident in two ways: imagery and revision. The natural imagery associated with Sutpen's journey—the mountain to the plain, the cave, the lost island over a volcano, the swamp where he met his death amid overgrown weeds—has Jungian qualities. The galloping horse and the scythe also have obvious mythical connotations. The nationalistic aspect of the myth was added in revision. A parenthetical remark, "(when the ship from the Old Bailey reached Jamestown probably)," is added to a description of the Sutpen family's move into the Tidewater region. Sutpen's mother's heritage is added parenthetically to a description of Sutpen's self-reliance: "(his mother was a mountain woman, a Scottish woman who, so he told Grandfather, never did quite learn to speak English)." The names of Civil War generals are absent in manuscript. Lee and Johnston and Jackson are added to the novel. A passage pulling together the whole story and implying mythical quest is added to an account of Sutpen's advances to Rosa: "an unbroken continuation of the long journey from Virginia." One interpretation of these additions is that they give concreteness and detail; another is that Faulkner wanted to make more obvious the national myth. The additions help make the story of Sutpen an American story, the story of the American experience, of the journey from naiveté to calculation. The seductive nature of riches as implanted in his mind by schoolroom stories of the

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21MS, p. 102, Absalom, p. 222. 22MS, p. 110, Absalom, p. 276.
25MS, p. 124, Absalom, p. 278.
West Indies and exemplified in the life of the planter, the subjugation of the black, the humiliation of the artist (the harassment of the architect), the speculation with Puritan money (the deal with Coldfield), 26 the attempt to replace the foundation of slave labor with poor white labor and the resulting rise of the poor white to throw off the yoke of social and economic imperialism--these are aspects of the American experience. The naïve presumption of righteous indignation that the American dream is based on proves to be as cruel as the heavy-handed oppressors from which the innocents escaped when they fled the European continent.

One other mythic passage was added in revision that has the effect of joining the human and national myth to a universal myth. Man is not only related to other men on a personal and national level, he is also related to something larger than men, and that something "laughs at degrees of latitude and temperature." Man rejecting man, man separated from man, even in the name of righteous indignation and innocence, is not taken seriously by that which Faulkner's omniscient narrator calls Environment: Quentin and Shreve are said to be connected after a fashion in a sort of geographical transubstantiation by that Continental Trough, that River which runs not only through the physical land of which it is the geologic umbilical, not only runs through the spiritual lives of the beings within its

26 Here, too, an addition to the manuscript plays up the American experience. The South had to pay "the price for having erected its economic edifice not on the rock of stern morality but on the shifting sands of opportunism and moral brigandage." MS, p. 118, Absalom, p. 260.
scope, but is very environment itself which laughs at degrees of latitude and temperature . . . .27

The basic structural device of this chapter is juxtaposition. It is the pattern that most clearly illuminates the doom to which Sutpen's journey is headed. Sutpen's words in defense of himself both in the early Mississippi past at the hunter's campfire and in the later Mississippi past in the office of General Compson are juxtaposed to his actions in such a way that the sympathy he might have created for himself with his words is completely destroyed. This chapter's position in the novel as a whole is such that any sympathy the reader might have for the downtrodden mountain boy is qualified by revelations already made by Rosa and Quentin and Shreve. His excuses and his justifications have a hollow ring. The expected sympathy that might arise from the word "innocence" is qualified in the same way; his actions subvert his innocence.

John Hagan has talked of the effect of intertwining the hunt of the architect with the story of Sutpen, a structure that he terms counterpoint, the "counterpointing of the story of one pursuit against that of another." Sutpen treats the architect in a ruthless and cold-blooded manner while accusing the "monkey nigger" of outrageous conduct, and Sutpen is not even aware of the parallel.28 Hagan compares the

27MS, p. 117, Absalom, p. 256. Lind speaks of this passage as "explicitly establishing the brotherhood of North and South." ("Design and Meaning," p. 300). The passage does more than define the nature of man, however. It defines the supernatural as that beyond the physical and the spiritual, that which is indifferent to man-made distinctions.

aggressive behavior of Sutpen and the black. Another comparison may also be made, that of the responses of men to repudiation and humiliation, the response of the architect as compared to that of Sutpen. The juxtaposition not only highlights Sutpen’s hypocrisy and cruelty but also reveals the betrayal of his heritage and the emptiness of his convictions. The architect wore his “embroidered vest and Fauntleroy tie” throughout his ordeal in the backwoods. He used his training to defy his captor, eluding Sutpen with calculations of stress and distance and trajectory. His one mistake cost him his freedom, but he did not degrade himself in his loss. Instead he remained indomitable and invincible, winning the respect of those who, in their demeaning attempt to hunt him down, only succeeded in degrading themselves. He came out of the cave with the symbols of his heritage tattered and bruised, his body threatened with extinction, but his spirit undaunted. Sutpen emerged from his cave to repudiate his heritage, to undergo extreme bodily torture for the sake of a spirit already corrupted by the decision to get even, to combat those who were responsible for his repudiation by acquiring “land and niggers and a fine house.” Sutpen’s design collapsed because he would not remain loyal to the father-in-law who deceived him, to the wife whose blood was unacceptable to him. The conclusions that can be drawn are not clear cut, of course. Sutpen did make the most of his mountain training; his fortitude and self-reliance attest to
to that. He, too, showed spirit in the face of certain defeat, and he won the respect of his employer in the West Indies and those who had once arrested him in Jefferson. Perhaps it is the feisty little man showing the courage of his convictions in the face of overwhelming odds that wins sympathy, while the cold and calculating attempt to achieve vengeance reveals not just a betrayal of background but an absence of principles that causes one to shudder. (One is reminded of the fythe and Lion in "The Bear.") It is the nature of each man's conviction that leads the reader to sympathize with the invincible spirit of one and deplore the indomitable will of the other.

Counterpoint may also be said to exist in the responses of Wash Jones and Sutpen to their poor white heritage. Like Sutpen, Wash has known the poverty of his class and the rejection by blacks. Sutpen's own slave child Clytie prevents Wash from entering the plantation house. But the poor white retainer endures humiliation for himself with only mild attempts at retaliation, and these are directed not at the source of his rejection, the owner of the house, but at the intermediary blacks. Wash's ego does not demand the salving that Sutpen's does. It is in the realm of family that Wash's passions are stirred. It is for the sake of his descendants that he assumes the defensive. Sutpen repudiates family ties when they hinder his purpose, but Wash avenges family honor, his concern for his "fatherless" granddaughters Milly counterpointing Sutpen's repudiation of his first son and the cruel dilemma he forced upon his second son. Wash's recognition on the day
of his death that the social classification of men that he had respected all his life was no guarantee of the moral superiority of one class over another, his knowledge that the plantation class was unworthy, that all men are one of a kind in their unworthiness, is a recognition of the bond of despair that makes all men brothers. For Wash, the destruction of the dream had only one ending—death. For Sutpen, the knowledge that all men are one never came: he died still unaware of his humanness. In setback after setback, he never allowed or admitted the destructibility of his dream; consequently, he never knew the pain of despair, the one bond between men. For Wash, knowledge was the death of hope. For Sutpen, hope was the death of knowledge.31

Sutpen's afternoon in General Compson's office is not a story in the same way that the hunt for the architect is or the affair with Milly is. Snatches of that afternoon are spaced all through the chapter, some in the midst of the story of the hunt. The predominant statement in these snatches is that Sutpen put his wife aside. During the hunt it is told that "he had put his first wife aside like eleventh and twelfth century kings did"32 and that "he was to tell grandfather thirty years

31William J. Sowder would probably agree that Sutpen never recognized despair, but his thesis is that Sutpen's life and death were examples of despair. Sutpen's adherence to a rigid plan eliminating for him the "anguish of contingency planning," and his refusal to be the poor boy he was and to be accountable for his deeds eliminated for him his possibilities for being human. The denial of possibility is the denial of faith, and, says Sowder, bad faith is despair. "Colonel Thomas Sutpen as Existentialist Hero," American Literature, 33 (1962), 495-499.

32p. 240.
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afterward he had found [the woman] unsuitable to his purpose and so put [her] aside. In the midst of Quentin's account of Bon's arrival at Sutpen's Hundred, it is reiterated that "he repudiated that first wife and child when he discovered that they would not be adjunctive to the forwarding of the design," and he is quoted as saying in General Compson's office: "To accomplish [the design] I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family--incidentally of course, a wife." During that afternoon, Sutpen elaborates on his acquisition of a wife, remaining casual in his references to her. These dispassionate utterances about an unknown woman are fleeting and abstract, calm rationalizations and justifications. The cruelty of the relationship between Sutpen and his first wife becomes apparent when Sutpen's treatment of Rosa and Milly and his action regarding his first wife are juxtaposed. The juxtaposition places the issue of his first marriage where it properly belongs--in the realm of human relationships, not in the realm of calculation and design.

Through means of juxtaposition, the chapter moves in two directions at once. The hunt story prejudices the reader against Sutpen, while the story of his boyhood and the West Indies story create a grudging sympathy for the man, who, in Compson's office, could not understand his mistake since, after all, he had only hoped to save other boys from the kind of rejection he had known. The sympathies of the reader are lured for a time in the direction of the rejected mountain youth, the
heroic young man in the West Indies, and even the puzzled old man in the General's office; but, at the same time, there is the troublesome presence of the hunted architect and the repudiated wife. The Wash story, too, moves in two directions. Wash believes in Sutpen's heroic stature. He cannot believe such a man will behave meanly. Thus, in the midst of the sordid story of Sutpen's last days, there are interspersed Wash's visions of the god on the galloping horse. The degradation of Sutpen is so much the more painful because his capability was so large. The severity of Wash's reaction to Sutpen's meanness is a measure of Wash's disappointment. It is a disappointment caused by the distance between human potential and human accomplishment; it is the recognition of despair. The structural technique of juxtaposition—alternating hope and disappointment, potential and accomplishment, heroic deeds and sordid affairs—serves to create for the reader the same sense of despair.

While the stories in the chapter are about man's inhumanity to man, the victims of inhumanity in this chapter are not black: Sutpen's humiliation has racial overtones, but the architect, the Spanish wife (as far as is known), Rosa, Milly, and Wash are not victims because of their race, a circumstance that may lead the reader to conclude that the central issue of the novel has shifted. In the sixth chapter, racial confrontation was central; here it becomes peripheral, overshadowed by confrontations of a different nature. But there is a pattern of images that serves to keep the focus on the central problem. The black "bull of a nigger" with teeth like tombstones, the "monkey nigger"
who turns Sutpen away, the balloon-faced blacks like "Pettibone's
nigger" whose laughter at the violence done to them by whites is
unbearable, the mud-covered blacks tracking down the architect, the
blacks on Haiti rushing at Sutpen with machetes, their "blank wall of
secret black faces" when Sutpen tries to get information from them, and
Jones's encounter with the "Sutpen niggers"—these images are constant
reminders of the black-white conflict. Though the nature of Sutpen's
repudiation of his wife and child is hidden, the melancholy history of
the little lost island, the despairing cry of its captive people, and
the desperate nature of the outlaws who rule it are sufficient fore-
shadowings. The haunting description of a land made fertile by blood
and of a people whose anguished cries go unheard portends the outcome of
Sutpen's deed. Hovering over all the events of Sutpen's life are the
faces of black men. It is these images that keep the focus of the
chapter on the black-white conflict while the story line takes a
different turn; it is these images that evoke the suspicion that
whatever Sutpen's mystery is, it is directly related to the ever-present
faces.

Analysis of Chapter VIII

Charles Bon: Quest

The structure of Chapter VIII may be said to be a story within a
story, since it is the reenactment of an old story by two youths
affected by that story. It may also be said to be a biography, since
it traces the life of Charles Bon. However, in that the storytellers become one with the story, in that the biography of Bon becomes a search for recognition, the chapter takes on the dimensions of a mythical quest. The modern youths explore the problem of brotherhood and the nature of love. Bon searches for meaning in his role as unwanted son. He and Henry search for viable means of living as brothers whose love for each other conflicts with religious and civil law. The quest is not for ultimate truth, for the truth—"He is your brother"—is known. It is known by the reader from the beginning of the chapter. It is known by Quentin and Shreve as they reconstruct Bon's life. It is known by Bon as soon as he sees Henry for the first time, and it is known by Henry a few months later. The ultimate truth pervades

36 The characterization of Bon was sharpened in revision, as Langford notes. (Collation, p. 39). Also intensified was the waiting process Bon underwent, the long days and weeks of expectancy and longing for Sutpen to recognize him as his son. In one case, in the manuscript Bon thinks that if Sutpen returns his (Bon's) letter to Judith unopened, then he (Bon) will be recognized and will know what action to take. In revision Sutpen's failure to do so is emphasized by an addition: "But it didn't come back. And the others didn't come back." Bon's expectancy is emphasized by another addition; when Henry and Bon go to Sutpen's Hundred at Christmas the second year, the words "Now. Now. Now." are added to Bon's anticipatory thoughts. Another addition makes Bon's longing even more poignant. In the manuscript Bon justifies Sutpen's actions: "he knows I would not [make any claim upon him] because he has already provided for me." In revision, the justification is elaborated: "he knows that I shall never make any claim upon any part of what he now possesses, gained at the price of what sacrifice and endurance and scorn (so they told me; not he; they) only he knows; knows that so well that it would never have occurred to him just as he knows it would never occur to me that this might be his reason, who is not only generous but ruthless, who must have surrendered everything he and mother owed to her and to me as the price of repudiating her, ... ." MS, pp. 114, 118; Absalom, pp. 332-333, 330-331.
the chapter. One aspect—the racial aspect—of this truth is kept hidden from the reader as it was from Henry and Bon until the end of the chapter. Its revelation, just as the youths feel they have grappled with the ultimate and prevailed, makes even more dramatic the difficulty of man's quest for a means of making brotherhood a concrete as well as universal truth, a viable as well as an abstract reality.

In the beginning of the chapter, while Shreve and Quentin face each other in the cold dormitory room, Shreve recounts the story of Henry's confrontation with his father in the library and his flight to New Orleans with Bon at Christmas in 1860. Then as Shreve and Quentin stare at each other while the room grows colder and the chimes come and go, Shreve traces Bon's life from a childhood of careful grooming by a vengeful mother to a young adulthood of luxury hovered over by the same scheming mother and by a calculating, greedy lawyer. Shreve explores the reasons for Bon's being sent to the University of Mississippi, ponders Bon's reactions to this decision, and imagines that Bon came into knowledge of his ancestry through recognition of Henry's facial features and through the lawyer's letter to Henry. Then as Shreve continues to do the talking for both himself and Quentin, he introduces love into the story, meaning at first love of Bon for Judith. He analyzes Bon's knowledge of and relationship to Judith and Henry. Then he begins the account of Bon's search for recognition, giving Bon's justification of each failure of Sutpen to give a signal of acknowledge-ment. At Quentin's slightest movement or at his comment "That's not love," Shreve returns to the Bon-Judith relationship, but he clearly
prefers to explore the Bon-Sutpen relationship. He sees Bon's sought-for recognition as coming second-hand through Henry: the scene in the library, one in which Bon is not present, is once more alluded to.

Then the flight from Sutpen's Hundred to New Orleans is described by an omniscient voice who gives Shreve credit for accurate invention ("probably true enough"). The scenes in New Orleans--the mother laughing, the lawyer miscalculating and being offered satisfaction in a duel--are detailed by Shreve, who then begins relating the war years, the plight of Henry coping with the problem of incest, the dilemma of Bon not knowing what to do, still hoping for a personal recognition. Both brothers hope the war will solve their problems, Bon challenging Henry to kill him as he leads troops into battle, and Henry begging Bon to let him die of battle wounds. As Bon and Henry suffer the heat of battle and passion, Shreve and Quentin feel the cold of New England winter. The voices of the modern youths cease, and the circumstances under which Henry and Bon decide to write to Judith are recounted in silence, the reader getting the revelation in an italicized passage. Shreve's voice intrudes to describe Rosa's and Quentin's trip to Sutpen's Hundred before silence falls again, and again the reader knows the thoughts of the two young men by means of italicized passages. The revelation that Bon has Negro blood remains unspoken. Two scenes--one a reunion in an army tent of Henry and his father after four years, the second a confrontation at a bivouac fire between Henry and his brother in full knowledge of their brotherhood--are visualized in the cold and silence of the Harvard room. Afterwards, Shreve marvels aloud
that Bon rode to Sutpen's Hundred in the face of certain death and suggests that love was his motive for placing the octogenarian's picture in his metal case. Finally, the cold has its effect and Shreve leads the way to bed.

The structural devices in the chapter that focus the attention on the quest for brotherhood are several. First, Shreve structures the story of Bon around the absence of and the search for a father, making the quest for recognition the central theme of Bon's life. Second, the scenes in number, order, and style turn a light, steadily increasing in intensity, on the relationship between the two brothers. Third, the handling of point of view is such that all men become one in the primordial quest. Fourth, numerous images reinforce the idea of the family of man. And finally, the introduction of the lawyer as a surrogate for Bon's father and the elaboration of the character of Bon's mother call attention to the obstacles in the path to brotherhood. The picture of the father and his surrogate foreshadows the action of the brothers; in a world of such fathers, no brotherhood can exist.

Immediately after recapitulating the library scene, Shreve decides that Bon had not been told by his mother that Sutpen was his father, that as a child he probably did not even realize he did not have a father. The first part of Shreve's creation, then, is the story of Bon's coming into knowledge of his father. In this first part, Bon is pictured as not knowing, then as vaguely wondering, and finally on the steamboat going to Oxford as soberly questioning the meaning of his life. In the second part of Shreve's story, Bon has come into knowledge; he has
seen Henry and read the lawyer's letter. He is now a man with a mission: to stand before and be recognized by his father. After a long wait and many missed opportunities by Sutpen, the sought-for recognition does come, but only indirectly through Henry. It is not the recognition Bon wanted; nevertheless, he assumes brotherly duties, becoming Henry's protector and provider, since Henry has renounced his home and father. In the third part of Shreve's creation, Bon is again wondering what his course should be, primarily concerned with his relationship to his sister, though still hoping that Sutpen will signal that he is his father. Shreve's narration stops before the consequences of Bon's quest are revealed, and it is given to an omniscient voice to introduce the climactic portion of the chapter. But Shreve's story constitutes a crucial journey for brotherhood--the journey to the source, a common father. The fruitlessness of Bon's quest for recognition from his father portends his disastrous end.

Shreve focuses his attention on Bon's search for a father, but it is a focus that he comes to through examination of the library episode. The words of Sutpen to the effect that Bon knew he was Henry's brother lead Shreve to speculate on Bon's knowledge of and search for his paternity. This scene in the library not only gives focus for Shreve's story, but it gives thematic focus to the chapter. It is the scene that is referred to most, not only beginning the chapter, but being alluded to midway through, and being compared to one of the closing scenes. The treatment of the scene is an example of what Douglas Thomas calls "memory-narrative." The chapter begins with a point; then recalls
incidents associated with or leading to that point, a spatial rather than sequential technique. In this case the scene is recalled; then events leading to it are given. The treatment of the scene is also an example of a single event becoming a part of all other events. The scene in the library becomes one with the scene in the tent, where the father, once more facing his son across a table, this time a map table, again discusses Bon, this time revealing that Bon is part Negro. The library and tent scenes become one with the dormitory scene, where Shreve and Quentin glare at each other across a desk. The revelation "He is your brother" that makes the first scene significant permeates the other scenes, even though the sentence is not spoken in all of them.

In addition to being the subject of the first scene and consequently associated with scenes similar in setting, brotherhood is also the topic of the chapter's climactic scene—the bivouac fire at dawn with the two brothers drawn to it for warmth. The concern of the older brother and the passion of the younger have often been noted, the thematic focus of the chapter being here the most intense. It is also a scene that draws meaning from its similarities to other scenes. Bon's act of handing Henry a gun in the final scene is his third attempt to get himself destroyed. He has offered the lawyer a chance to shoot him in a duel, satisfaction for Bon's having struck the lawyer in anger. He has urged Henry to shoot him in the midst of battle so that a "Yankee

37 "Memory Narrative in Absalom, Absalom!" Faulkner Studies, 2 (1953), 20.
ball" would be blamed. The lawyer would not shoot a valuable property and a better marksman, and Henry would not shoot a brother. The security of Bon's life in these instances, when he is thought to be a racial equal, is in sharp contrast to his vulnerability when his Negro blood is revealed. The impact of the racial issue is made the stronger by the preliminary scenes.

The intensity of the third scene is also heightened by the despair of the first two. Bon wishes for death as both a solution to his dilemma and as a means of beating his mother and the lawyer at their game. It is Shreve's speculation that as far as the New Orleans pair are concerned, Bon represents just so much rich and rotting dirt: his death is a foregone conclusion on their part. For Bon to die before their plan comes to fruition would be for Bon to defeat them. His death wish is denied by both the lawyer and Henry, however, and after four years of war, Bon has decided that he will live, that the flesh after all can carry on. Ironically, when he wanted to die, he could not; when he decided to live, his life became expendable. His offering his gun to Henry in the bivouac scene is an act that carries in it the implications of his two earlier attempts to lose his life.

The scene in the lawyer's den adds another complexity to the final scene. Even though Bon knew that the lawyer could not defeat him in a duel, that a duel would be certain death for the lawyer, Bon also knew that the lawyer was the winner. "I could shoot him . . . . But he would still beat me." It is a judgment that haunts the bivouac scene. Henry would shoot Bon, but could he, by doing so, beat him?
The final scene also draws meaning from a scene between Bon and his mother. The knowledge which is significant enough to Henry to determine his fatal course of action is knowledge that Bon cannot accept as a crucial factor in his life. Bon's flippancy in the face of Henry's anguish ("So it's the miscegenation, not the incest"; "I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister.") echoes Bon's nonchalance in a conversation with his mother on her discovery of the octoroon, a conversation in which he remarked on "a spot of Negro blood" as "being a little matter." Henry's dilemma, like that of Bon's mother, is intensified by the knowledge that a drop of Negro blood is a matter of indifference to Bon. "The desperate urgency and fear" of the mother, "the desperate casting for this straw or that" becomes one with the panting and trembling of Henry, the suffocating struggle to gain breath while Bon watches both with that "faint expression that might be called smiling." The final scene then reverberates with meanings not explicit in its words and action, but rather coming to it from other and similar scenes, meanings that gather momentum as the chapter progresses and come to a crescendo in this last confrontation.

Most scenes in the chapter are laid either in the immediate present or in the distant past. But one scene comes from Rosa's life—the encounter with Clytie on the night Rosa and Quentin went to Sutpen's Hundred. Since it is from a different time, it seems isolated and incongruous, or as John Hagan says, it "appears utterly irrelevant and arbitrary." One has to decide whether the scene is a lapse on the
author's part or whether it is made conspicuous for good reason.

Egan offers an explanation: the flashback to Quentin's and Rosa's trip immediately precedes the reconstruction of the tent scene where Henry learns that Bon is part Negro. Egan believes this position appears "arbitrary at this point unless we are implicitly being asked to connect the visit in some way with the conversation between Sutpen and Henry which Quentin and Shreve go on immediately to reconstruct."

Quentin's visit to Sutpen's Hundred is the source of his knowledge of Sutpen's disclosure at the encampment. Henry's visit to the tent is the source of his knowledge of Bon's heritage. Bon's blood is the significant revelation of each scene. It might be added that by mentioning Rosa's confrontation with Clytie, Shreve reminds the reader of an earlier confrontation between the two when Rosa felt the bond of sisterhood between herself and Clytie, a bond that Rosa resisted with all her being. This bond and this kind of resistance will be the content of the next two scenes. The isolated scene, then, hints at what is to come, recalls what has passed, and implicitly expresses the nature of the bond of brotherhood. The scene also keeps Rosa before the reader, and it is necessary to do so because Rosa's last act and the completion of the announcement of her death are yet to come.

Not only in number and position but also in style, the scenes concerned with brotherhood draw attention to themselves, particularly the tent and bivouac scenes. Whereas the scene in which Bon offers the

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38 "Fact and Fancy in Absalom, Absalom!" College English, 24 (December 1962), 218.
lawyer a chance to shoot him has no frame and edges, the scene in which
Bon offers a gun to Henry is set apart typographically. The first
scene is a continuation of Shreve's speculations; the second is an
unspoken visualization. The first scene is narrative with Shreve
relating words and actions; the second is drama with no intervention
from a narrator. The first scene is only glimpsed, since Shreve moves
on to his analysis and probing without stopping to gaze. His verb is
"would be" since his purpose is speculative. The bivouac scene has no
commentary: the present tense is used even in stage directions; the
dialogue is crisp and distinct, not ambiguous and wordy; and the reader
does not have to cope with digressions and time shifts. The abrupt
change of style calls attention to the issue of brotherhood. The
simplicity of style belies the complexity of the questions facing Henry
and Bon. Though the scene in the lawyer's den has the same potential for
drama, though the dilemma of Charles Bon is as perplexing, the handling
of style prevents the Bon-lawyer confrontation from being as significant
or as memorable as the Bon-Henry conflict.

The relationship between the two brothers revealed by the various
scenes is given further dimensions by the treatment of point of view.
Just as the focal chapter for discussion of theme is often the chapter
on the life of Sutpen, so the focal chapter for discussion of point of
view is this chapter. Faulkner, who demonstrated his ability to create
distinct points of view in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying,
has been accused of being unable or unwilling to give his narrators in
this novel distinctive voices. Given the knowledge of the earlier
achievement, one surely has to assume that the lack of distinction was deliberate, not shoddy or lazy craftsmanship. Making this assumption, one must find reasons for the sometimes blurred, sometimes confusing point of view. This chapter offers one explanation.

In Chapter I there are two points of view, that of the poetess Rosa and that of the omniscient narrator close to Quentin Compson. In Chapter II Quentin's father is the narrator, though there are times when he waxes poetic so that the reader is reminded of Rosa. As Mr. Compson's narration lengthens into Chapters III and IV, he becomes less the legend bearer and more the prober and speculator. Thus, there is a shift in point of view, though the narrator remains the same. In Chapter V Rosa's voice dominates, though some of her lines are reminiscent of Bon's letter. In Chapter VI Shreve's narration is likened by Quentin to that of Mr. Compson: "He sounds like father." Compson is quoted by Quentin several times, and his voice is also heard in his letter to Quentin. In Chapter VII all the generations of Compson men as well as Sutpen himself are heard to speak. The voices of Shreve and Quentin continue to be heard; it is they who select what is heard from others. By the time the reader approaches Chapter VIII, he has heard from so many voices that he is not sure which narrator said what. Faulkner now capitalizes upon the ambiguity he has already achieved. In omniscient voice in the middle of the chapter notes that though Shreve does the verbalizing, Quentin's utterances would have been the same, that it really does not make any difference who is telling the story. The point of view thus becomes explicitly communal. The idea of community
is further advanced by the device of having Quentin and Shreve become Henry and Bon, thus expanding the point of view across the barriers of time. Two of the italicized passages at the conclusion of the chapter are controlled by the thoughts of Charles and Henry, respectively. The reader is able to participate in the decision to write to Judith through the thoughts and words of Charles, a decision based in part on his belief that God has gone away without remembering to tell anyone. The reader is involved in the tent scene through the eyes and thoughts of Henry, a scene in which Henry, too, expresses the view that God has gone. Though there is a multiplicity of voices, there is a commonality of expression, and this chapter pointedly illustrates this paradox. Not only is point of view individual and communal, present and past, but it is also spoken and unspoken. There is no controlling presence to lead the reader into the bivouac scene. No thoughts or comments intervene between the reader and the action. He becomes not a listener but an observer, taking the point of view upon himself. The inclusive point of view serves a thematic purpose. Its communal aspects—the merging of otherwise distinct voices into similar patterns of speech and thought, the involvement of the reader in the creation of the story—represent another means of focusing the chapter and the novel on brotherhood, the bond between men.

At the same time that the unity of men is being pointed up, the distance between men is being revealed. Quentin and Shreve are more easily able to join Bon and Henry across the barrier of time than Bon and Henry are to join each other across the barrier of race. For the Sutpen youths, the gun Charles offered Henry is more powerful than the
cloak Charles placed around Henry's shoulders. The distance of time and space that Quentin and Shreve and the reader have makes the cloak more significant than the gun. Distance gives proper perspective to the barriers to brotherhood and, in so doing, creates hope. However, the omniscient point of view early in the chapter has cautioned that distance is deceiving: it often makes the past seem romantic, makes the real seem ideal. Quentin and Shreve imagine a lovely Edenic summer day where lovers stroll in a garden, but the omniscient voice reminds the reader that it was actually a winter night. The reader must remember, too, that the scene of brotherly love is already known to have been a prelude to death and despair. The ideal of brotherhood is easier to imagine than to cope with. On the one hand, point of view reveals the unity of man; on the other hand, point of view calls attention to the separation of man.

Brotherhood and its ramifications are explored in the biography of Bon, in the treatment of scenes, and in the handling of point of view. In addition, numerous images in this chapter magnify the interrelatedness of the family of man. Some images have echoes in other chapters—images of spreading water, chimes, and balloons; and some images are particularly Southern—images of horse grooming, rich and rotting dirt, holly and mistletoe, steamboat balls, Derby Day and Decoration Day. Most notable, however, are the goodly number of images with primordial associations, giving the chapter the flavor of myth. There are pictures evoking man's inherent disposition to tell stories: "old Abraham weak and full of years" from the patriarchal tales of Hebrew
literature, "the silken and tragic Lancelot" (son) from the tales of chivalry, "the lawyer . . . smooth and oily" from the melodrama, the lovers strolling in the garden from the love story, and the "gray east" turning "primrose" and "red with firing" in the bivouac scene, a scene reminiscent of American war movies. There are also images of the elemental side of man: blood, family, creation, sex. These images are for the most part couched in the language of myth so that they are not only sense impressions but abstractions and symbols. Of blood, it is said that names and faces do not matter; only the blood, "the immortal brief recent intrentsible blood," matters. Blood, with its associations of life, of relation, of the ongoing race of man, coursing as it does through the veins of Henry and Bon and of Quentin and Shreve, becomes symbolic of the oneness of the race of man. Bon's comment on a "little spot of Negro blood" becomes in effect a comment on a little bit of man.

Images of family are almost obliterated by language with mythical and theological overtones. The doctrine of original sin, as well as the view that all men are brothers related by that same sin, is expressed in a passage describing Bon's background: since Bon did not know his father, since he knew only that he had a mother who swooped down and grabbed him up from his play from time to time to hold him with a kind of fury, perhaps he had decided that no man had a father, no one personal Porto Rico or Haiti, but all mother faces which ever bred swooping down at those almost calculable moments out of some obscure ancient general affronting and outraging which the actual living articulate meat had not even suffered but merely inherited; all boy flesh that walked and
breathed, stemming from that one legendary slumber dark fatherless and so brothered perennial and ubiquitous everywhere under the sun . . . .

In this passage the creation of Bon is seen as the creation of every man; but in another passage his birth also becomes the birth of Helen: it seems that his mother emerged from "a state of blessed amnesia" in which she had been impregnated by some dark force; "he had been fathered on her not through that natural process but had been blotted onto and out of her body by the old infernal immortal male principle of all unbridled terror and darkness." There is another implication in this passage: his was a virgin birth made possible by the destruction of innocence. Bon's birth represents not only the advent of the classical age but also the beginning of the Christian age.

The confluence of innocence and terror is also alluded to in a passage in which Bon is thinking of the power he has over Henry:

what cannot I do with this willing flesh and bone if I wish; this flesh and bone and spirit which stemmed from the same source that mine did, but which sprang in quiet peace and contentment and ran in steady even though monotonous sunlight, where that which he bequeathed me sprang in hatred and outrage and unforgiving and ran in shadow—what could I not mold of this malleable and eager clay which that father himself could not—to what shape of what good there might, must, be in that blood and none handy to take and mold that portion of it in me until too late.

The same factors that enter into the creation of Bon also enter into his relationship with his brother. The images of sunlight and shadow, carrying in them as they do suggestions of good and evil, innocence and knowledge, hope and despair, symbolize not only the nature of individual

39 P. 299. 40 P. 313. 41 Pp. 317-318.
life but the nature of life in community. Bon's knowledge and Henry's innocence represent the forces that interact in society as well as those that contend with each other in the single human consciousness. The passage has further inferences: the image of the clay has theological connotations: Bon the son is the redeemer and the father is the creator. The son offers hope in that he sees the possibility of good, while the father is a reminder that man is less than good, that he is a creature of despair. The image of the source and that which springs from it, revealing as it does that both light and dark have the same origin, is another image fraught with primordial and theological meanings. Both the creation of man and the possibilities for man are captured in this description of Bon's relationship to Henry.

Images of sex are not as mythically oriented as images of family, but they, too, raise questions about the nature of man and the meaning of life, questions that are larger in import than the story of Charles Bon. Two images of mating were added in revision. Shreve pictures the earth as being overlaid with a "massy five-foot-thick maggot-cheesy solidarity ... in which men and women in couples are ranked and racked like ninepins." He later adds that "the dreamy immeasurable coupling which floats oblivious above the trembling and harried instant, the:

was-not: is: was: is a perquisite only of balloony and weightless elephants and whales," that in reality the "fleshy encounter" is fleeting, a "brief all." He comments in the first instance that it

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1S22, p. 139, Absalom, p. 312. 1S3S, p. 145, Absalom, p. 324.
is possible to escape the "massive solidarity," and in the second instance that perhaps only an incestuous or sinful encounter could there be an "immeasurable coupling," no uncoupling or escape. The implications of both solidarity and transience, of both escape and capture, make Shreve's comments on sex equivocal, and though the subject is primordial in nature, the images—"cheesy," "ninepins," and "balcony elephants"—are not suggestive of myth. They are additions, however, that move the story of Bon from the particular to the universal, the first image being added to Shreve's view of Bon saying good-bye to the octoroon, the second image being added to Shreve's examination of Bon's attitude toward Judith. Thus, while some images are characteristic of this novel and some are specifically Southern, many evoke the story of the whole race of man, focusing reader attention on the qualities that men hold in common.

The quest story, the emphasized scenes, the communal point of view, and the symbolic images underscore the bonds between men. The characterization of Bon's parents illuminates the obstacles to brotherhood. Shreve's creation of a lawyer as a surrogate for Bon's father represents a departure in method for Faulkner in this novel. The lawyer is portrayed as undiluted evil, a villain in the melodramatic mode, the devil incarnate. In contrast to the complexity of the other characters, the lawyer stands out. No other character is so clearly one-dimensional, so decidedly unsympathetic. Also, whereas the reader gets the viewpoint of at least two narrators for the other characters, the lawyer is treated only by Shreve, though of course Shreve speaks as part of a
chorus, and it is assumed that Quentin would have described the lawyer in the same way. (The lawyer is not only ignored by other narrators, he is also relegated to obscurity by critical readers. The major critics do not include the lawyer in their discussions of Absalom, Absalom!)

Shreve's creation of Bon's mother as a paranoid woman consumed by her passion for revenge is a fuller and more unsympathetic portrait than the brief glimpses allowed of her in Sutpen's story to General Compson. The girl who reloaded muskets in the Haitian battle and who apparently nursed the wounded Sutpen back to health becomes the woman who nurtured her son as an instrument of revenge against that same Sutpen. The creation of the avenging mother and the grasping father surrogate may be said to serve two purposes in the structure of the chapter and the novel: (1) to reinforce the evil of Sutpen; (2) to suggest impending doom in a chapter otherwise concerned with brotherhood.

The wronged woman and the grasping lawyer are not only two people living in New Orleans, plotting a trap for Sutpen; they are also representatives of the forces in Sutpen's nature which lead to his destruction. Like his first wife, Sutpen seeks to avenge an old insult, and like the lawyer, Sutpen calculates human worth in terms of personal gain, putting aside those who do not serve his purpose. Revenge and Greed spring their trap successfully on both the concrete and the abstract levels: Sutpen is at least as responsible for his fall as are the New Orleans pair, and the destruction wrought necessarily includes others besides Sutpen--Bon, Henry, and Judith; Ellen and Rosa, Wash and Milly; the octoroon and her child; apparently even the mother and the
lawyer. The malevolent forces, whether within Sutpen or personified as his detractors, betray him and wreak punishment on the just as well as the unjust.

The two characters also help create a dark undercurrent, a foreboding sense of doom in the chapter. The dramatic scenes with their emphasis on brotherhood are so much the more poignant since they are played out against a background of revenge and greed. The nobler aspirations of man must contend with his darker nature. The Sons of the world must struggle with both hereditary and social evils, knowing that good can never win but hoping that at least evil can be kept at bay: "if he just didn't make the mistake of believing that he could beat all of it, if he just remembered to be quiet and be alert he could beat some of it." The presence of the lawyer and the mother confirm dread and despair even in the midst of hope and aspiration, confirm the depth of separation even in the midst of a search for brotherhood.

It is surely significant that the one clearly-drawn villain in the novel is a lawyer, a man trained in logic and reason. The corruption of the meaning of law from an instrument to preserve harmony and brotherhood to an instrument to uphold the privileged and powerful is nowhere better represented than in the person of the oily and servile lawyer. The condemnation of a system whose public defenders place material wealth above human worth is unequivocal. On the other hand, the lawyer's relationship to the racial question is ambiguous. Clearly,

\(^{44}\text{p. 310.}\)
a major obstacle in the path of the two brothers is a racial law, a law without love or compassion. Just as clearly, the lawyer has no love or compassion for his fellows. But the reader never knows whether the lawyer is aware that his client is part Negro. Though clearly greedy, the lawyer is not clearly racist. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that one unjust law breeds degradation of all law, and the lawyer is the fruit of the slave society rather than the seed. He proves, however, that the fruit is even more poisonous than the seed, and his presence in the chapter underscores the hazards in the quest for brotherhood.

If the lawyer represents an ugly consequence of racial injustice, Sutpen stands as its exemplar. The lawyer is but a shadow of the basic evil—denial of kinship on the basis of race. Sutpen blunts Bon's quest for sonship and thus destroys the basis of brotherhood—a common father. It is perhaps significant that just before Bon makes the decision to marry his sister, he points out to Henry that God had forsaken them four years ago, a charge that Henry repeats to his father just before he decides to murder Bon. With no God or Source of Life, with no father, there can be no sons or brothers. In the absence of brothers and sisters, there can be no incest or fratricide. In the absence of a God, there can be nothing to life but the "old mindless sentient undreaming meat." In the absence of either God or father, there can be no brotherhood.
Analysis of Chapter IX:

Jim Bond: Prophecy

The last chapter of the novel differs from all the others in that it does not contain stories out of the distant past. It covers a time span of five months in the present—September 1909 to January 1910—and contains a prophecy for the future. The past, however, hangs so heavily over the chapter that the accounts of the very recent trips to Sutpen's Hundred seem to be tales out of an earlier time. In his trip to the old house with Rosa, Quentin sees the face of Henry Sutpen, the haunted mirror of the past. In her last trip to Sutpen's Hundred, Rosa sees the wasted remnants of the past consumed by fire and hears the howl of Jim Bond, a howl that is not only a reverberation out of the past but a portent of the future. In the conclusion of Mr. Compson's letter to Quentin there is speculation that the characters out of the past are no longer ghosts but "actual people" in another "place or bourne." However, if Rosa, through her trips and the account of her funeral makes Quentin examine the past, Shreve, with his prophecy that "the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere," forces Quentin to look at the future. In the structure of the chapter, looking back is predominant, but looking ahead is the last act.

The chapter takes the form of dialogue, with Shreve asking questions and Quentin responding to them while he visualizes his trip to Sutpen's Hundred and while they both describe and visualize Rosa's last trip.

P. 378.
out there. Quentin's answers are evasive, and his physical and mental state changes in the course of the chapter from peaceful shivering at the beginning to distressed and rigid staring out the window at the end. The letter from his father materializes out of the darkness between two of Shreve's comments, and the written words of Compson about the afterlife of the Sutpen's are followed by the voiced words of Shreve about the future of the Sutpen's in the western hemisphere. The dialogue concludes with the famous question "Why do you hate the South?" and the equally famous denial "I don't hate the South." Though the youths' dialogue is finished, there is no resolution. Though the mystery of the old house is revealed and the house itself destroyed and though Compson's letter is concluded, the reader remains mystified. What is the meaning of Shreve's prophecy and of Quentin's denial? The reader, like the youths, after having come face to face with the past must now come to grips with its meaning for the present and the future. The chapter is thus open-ended: the quest continues.

The structure of the chapter is such that two thematic conclusions may be drawn—one hopeful and one despairing. The ordering of the chapter and its position in relation to other chapters lead to a pessimistic conclusion. But the focus placed on Jim Bond leads to a more optimistic outlook. The use of italics to draw attention to certain questions and themes may also be viewed in either of two ways. The consequence of the peculiar structure of the chapter is such that the reader may have his faith in man renewed or he may, like Quentin, succumb to despair. Either consequence is awesome, and the latter is perhaps the easier.
The ordering of the chapter is such that, in each of its sections, images and symbols of death and despair have the ultimate position. Quentin's remembrance of his trip to Sutpen's Hundred ends with the conversation between Quentin and the corpse-like Henry. The conversation was not the last event of the trip. Chronologically it should have come midway in the story; but Quentin does not reveal it in logical order. It is the climax of the remembrance. The trip Rosa made three months later with an ambulance is visualized as having been haunted by the howling of Jim Bond. His is the last voice to be heard as the mansion is consumed by fire and as Rosa collapses into a coma from which she never recovers. Compson's letter to Quentin contains a note of hope that the victims of the past will at last be comforted, but it concludes with the image of a worm that was alive when it was thrown up by the grave diggers but which shortly froze to death. Shreve's prophecy that all men would come to be heirs of Jim Bond, sons of the same father, is followed by Quentin's negative affirmation of the South: "I don't hate it." The concluding lines of each of the sections of the chapter—the two episodes at Sutpen's Hundred, the letter, and the dialogue—counteract any hopeful notes that have been raised. Quentin's peacefulness at the beginning of the chapter is replaced by his panting at the end, making even clearer the despair that characterizes this final chapter.

At the conclusion of Chapter VIII, the anguish of Henry and the brotherly concern of Bon have just been visualized, and the judgment by Shreve that Bon's last act, placing the octoroon's picture in his
metal case, was an act of love has just been made. These are visions of the nobler qualities of man. The good feeling of Quentin at the beginning of Chapter IX results from the aura of warmth and chivalry created in the preceding scenes. But the probing questions of Shreve force Quentin to see other scenes, other faces, other traits of his ancestors. Ross, forcing her way into the house, Henry, wasted and dying, the mansion going up in flames, Jim Bond howling piteously—they are the scenes that Quentin and the reader are left with. Vengeance, death, desolation, and despair are more apparent than compassion and love. The final chapter of the novel successfully snuffs out the expectations raised by Shreve's interpretation of the octoroon's picture and lays bare the reality behind the romantic visions of the past.

This chapter not only follows scenes of warmth and compassion, but it is the concluding chapter in the dialogue between Quentin and Shreve, a dialogue inspired by the arrival of Compson's letter (Chapter VI). The material between the opening of the letter and the close focuses on four generations—Sutpen and his descendants. In Chapter VI, Charles Etienne is the central character, his biography being literally the core of the chapter. In Chapter VII, Sutpen himself is the subject of biography and autobiography. In Chapter VIII, it is Charles Bon whose life and motives are probed. In Chapter IX, it is Jim Bond, the slack-mouthed heir, who is present in both episodes at Sutpen's Hundred and who escapes the flames to serve as the genesis of Shreve's prophecy.
The conclusion of Compton's letter brings to an end the account of the lineage of Sutpen and his first wife, a lineage that belies the romantic myth of pure blood lines and aristocratic behavior.

The last chapter is not a biography of Jim Bond in the same way that the three preceding chapters were biographical. But Faulkner did intend that the saddle-colored youth be in the forefront of the chapter. His revisions of the manuscript are evidence that he meant for the last of the Sutpens to have his turn at center stage. Langford speaks of these revisions as "the most significant" in Chapter IX.\textsuperscript{16} In the manuscript Quentin calls the name of Jim Bond when the idiot appears on the scene during the first trip to Sutpen's Hundred. In the revision Quentin refers to him as "the negro": his name is not used until Rosa falls, and then she asks the boy his name. Thus his name is set apart; he calls attention to himself by having to introduce himself. In the manuscript Jim Bond is not mentioned at all in the account of the second trip, but in the revision his howling and bellowing are mentioned nine times in three pages and his name is used once and emphasized by appositives: "and he, Jim Bond, the scion, the last of his race, seeing it [the face of Clytie in the swirling smoke] too now and howling with human reason now since even he could have known what he was howling about."\textsuperscript{17} In the manuscript, Jim Bond is mentioned in the prophecy, but in the revision his effect on Quentin is revealed: Shreve tells how the boy cannot be caught, is rarely seen, cannot be used, but is there

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16}Collation, p. 40.
\item \textsuperscript{17}MS, p. 174, Absalom, p. 376.
\end{itemize}
nevertheless: then he asks Quentin, "You still hear him at night sometimes. Don't you?" The emphasis on Jim Fend in the revision is unmistakable and, as Langford says, "highly dramatic." The emphasis on Jim Fend in the revision is unmistakable and, as Langford says, "highly dramatic."

Another revision made in the chapter of structural interest is the reversal of italicized words to regular print and vice versa. In manuscript Quentin's words were all italicized and his conversation with Henry was placed in quotation marks. Reversal of this procedure left only the conversation italicized, thus emphasizing the scene which Langford calls climactic for Quentin. Quentin is haunted by the scene, but it is the howling of the idict that still keeps him awake at nights, the bellowing that is emphasized by repetition, the wailing of the last of the Sutpens that both Quentin and the reader are left with. The Quentin-Henry confrontation climaxes the quest of Rosa and Quentin and is probably the source of Quentin's knowledge of Bon's mother, but the climax of the Sutpen saga, the end of the letter, and the conclusion of the Quentin-Shreve dialogue are yet to come.

The effect of the elimination of many of the italicized passages is to emphasize what is left in italics. In addition to the Quentin-Henry exchange, there are four other passages: Sutpen's "At least I have life left"; Quentin's unvoiced thought, "Miss Rosa," when Shreve says, "Aunt Rosa"; Compass's letter about Rosa; and Quentin's thought, "I don't hate it." after his spoken declaration, "I don't hate the South." The first italicized phrase is a remark of Sutpen's that Quentin repeats as he

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48 MS, p. 175, Absalom, p. 378. 49 Collation, p. 41.

50 Ibid., p. 41.
enters upon the Sutpen domain. It seems to be a hopeful statement, but the succeeding underscored passages make a mockery of Sutpen's words. Quentin's conversation with the dying Henry emphasizes the pitiable condition of the Sutpen line; what life is left is fading fast. The italicized "Miss Rosa," remaining as it does unspoken, is evidence of a dying distinction: Quentin's concern for correctness regarding racial matters has up to this point been expressed, but now he lets Shreve's "Aunt Rosa" pass uncorrected. There is little life left in the principle that motivated Sutpen. The italicized letter is confirmation of the death of the self-appointed chronicler of the Sutpen saga, a notice of the removal of the principals to another realm where they will be dealt with more justly. With the passing of Rosa, the last reason for keeping alive the Sutpen name also passes. The last italicized passage, which also occurs in Quentin's thoughts, is "I don't hate it." The lack of affirmation, the negative "I don't hate" rather than a more positive "I do love the South" is evidence of a dying loyalty; there is no strong and vibrant hope in the future but a numbing despair. The principles for which Sutpen stood and the people who might have kept them alive go out one by one in this chapter, and their passing is noted in italics.

There is another irony in Sutpen's words: the "life left" comes to be embodied in Jim Bond. The legacy of the past that Quentin finally has to come to terms with is not the wasted, dying son of Sutpen but the hulking, howling great-grandson; not the shattered romantic dreams but the waking nightmare. The legacy, in spite of the grand scheme of his
forebear, is Jim Bond, a creature immune to racial taunt, indifferent to racial distinction, lucid only when its source of love and providence is taken from it. It is a legacy Faulkner chose to embody in an idiot, a man who is, after all, loyal, dutiful, courteous, and aware of the source of his wellbeing. Nevertheless, for the rational Western man, the knowledge that it is the idiot who endures is painful. Jim Bond's lack of reason arouses fear, and his racial make-up serves to aggravate further the distress of Quentin and to mock Thomas Sutpen's ambition. Shreve's assertion that in time all men will come to be descendants of this mulatto idiot is a prophecy alien to Quentin's heritage and Sutpen's design, but it is an eventuality foreseen by Charles Bon. It is, after all, the "old mindless sentient undreaming meat that doesn't even know any difference between despair and victory" that endures.

The italics serve then to focus reader attention on the ironic legacy of Thomas Sutpen. The centrality of Jim Bond makes clear what the real legacy is, and Shreve reinforces it with his prophecy:

I think that in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it won't quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they won't show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be Jim Bond; and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings.\(^1\)

The meaning of his prophecy remains to be decided. Is the legacy of Sutpen something to be feared or to be joyfully embraced? Will the sons of Bond be irrational creatures living in bondage and chaos, or will

\(^1\)P. 378.
they be the meek who inherit the earth? Will the heirs of the mulatto idiot be enslaved by the dark forces in human nature that create barriers between men, or will they be united by the bond of brotherhood? Is the bellowing in the night terrifying because it reminds Quentin of the gulf's between men, or is it awful because it demands that every man be his brother's keeper? Is Shreve's proclamation that someday all men will blend in with their environment a prophecy that in the future there will be no distinctions of race or class or creed to separate men from each other and there will be a harmonious relationship between man and nature? Perhaps the reason for Quentin's distress is his knowledge that the distinctions between men were powerful enough to overcome both Henry and Rosa when they came face to face with their respective "brother" and "sister," either of whom would have been more compatible than Jim Bond. The hopeful prophecy of Shreve is shadowed by knowledge of the power of the darker forces in man.

Analysis of Chronology and Genealogy

Sometime after the publication of *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner became aware of the weight of the burden he had placed on his readers and added a chronology and genealogy to the novel. The details in these additions do not always agree with the novel, a disagreement believed by Duncan Aswell to be deliberate in order that Faulkner could further emphasize the impossibility of imposing logic on human history. A more likely possibility is that Faulkner simply did not remember all the "concrete"

52 "The Puzzling Design of *Absalom, Absalom!*" pp. 80-81.
details of his novel. Whatever the case, these "facts" do not explain the novel; inasmuch as they are neutral names and dates, the burden of meaning still lies with the reader. On the other hand, since the substance of the novel grows out of these people and events, they may be said to be the structural foundation of the novel.

The chronology begins with the birth of Thomas Sutpen and ends with the burning of his mansion. It is concerned with the history of the Sutpens and not with Quentin Compson. The genealogy begins with Thomas Sutpen and ends with Shreve McGannon and includes the birth and death of Quentin. No mention is made in either the chronology or the genealogy of Quentin's father. In effect, Quentin and Shreve are made part of the Sutpen family tree. The genealogy does not distinguish between black and white members of the family; the sons and daughters of Sutpen are listed in the order of their birth, and the vital statistics of each is recorded in a simple, straightforward resume.

The simplicity and orderliness of the chronology and genealogy, the equal treatment afforded each character, contrast sharply and tellingly with the complexity and confusion of the novel, with the larger-than-life characterizations and the demeaning and dehumanizing actions and events. The tranquillity of the one intensifies the passion of the other, and the neutrality of the one mocks the antagonisms of the other.
CONCLUSION

ABSALEM, ABSALOM! EVOCATION OF DESPAIR

The arrangement of material in Absalom, Absalom! leads to the conclusion that man's inhumanity to man based on distinctions of race is an oppressive and inescapable burden. The thematic importance of race makes the novel particularly Southern, and the burden placed on the reader to understand and interpret makes the novel particularly modern. The apparent discontinuity of events and confusion of voices rests on a purposeful structure, one resilient enough to support a wide range of interpretations and yet firm enough to hold these interpretations to certain principles: estrangement is a condition of humankind, and man's inhumanity to man accentuates the condition; racial brotherhood is also a condition of man, and, in this novel, failure to accept and take responsibility for this condition results in an overwhelming despair.

The internal structure of the chapters has, in nearly every case, made race an important issue. Chapter I is climaxed by the fight between master and slave in the barn and by the merging of the black face of Clytie and the white face of Judith. Chapter IV probes the role of the black in the sexual structure of the South. Chapter V presents the dramatic touch of white flesh to black flesh in the Rosa-Clytie.
confrontation. Chapter VI focuses on the son of an octoroon. Chapter VII reveals the racial motivation of Sutpen and bulges with images of black faces. Chapter VIII is climaxed by the disclosure of Bon's black blood. Chapter IX is haunted by a mulatto idiot and climaxed by a forecast that in the future all will be sons of this same racially mixed creature. Even in Chapters II and III race is an undercurrent issue, there being in these two chapters respectively pictures of animal-like slaves working for Sutpen and an announcement of the desertion of the Coldfield Negroes as soon as the first Federal troops passed through Jefferson.

The relationship between the chapters also stresses the role of race. The Bon lineage is given fuller treatment than the Coldfield lineage, and the history of the Bons is reserved for the second half and climactic portions of the novel. The chapter arrangement not only emphasizes the black side of the Sutpen family, but also places the death of Bon in a pivotal position. Eight of the chapters revolve around the central chapter in a definite pattern. The first chapter outlines the creation of Sutpen's Hundred, an accomplishment treated as myth: "Be Sutpen's Hundred"; the last chapter includes an account of the destruction of Sutpen's Hundred, an event that also has mythical qualities: a roaring fire consumed the mansion. The second chapter recounts the building of the estate and the social forces interacting with its ongoing existence; the next to the last chapter recounts the pressures brought to bear on Sutpen that lead to the destruction of his position: the first wife, the War, the first son. The third chapter
traces the childhood and the motivations of Rosa Coldfield, civilized poor white, dehumanized by her own aunt and father; the third chapter from the end traces the life and motivation of Thomas Sutpen, primitive poor white, dehumanized by racial factors in his society. The fourth chapter describes the octoroon system, and the sixth chapter centers on one of its victims. The fifth and central chapter begins and ends with the death of Charles Bon. It is the first chapter in which human confrontation is viewed in terms of race. It is the only chapter in which the "arras-veil" is opened and the awesome reality of racial brotherhood/sisterhood is exposed and affirmed, even if only momentarily.

The movement toward the center of the novel is from creation; through female roles as illustrated by Rosa and Ellen, Judith and the octoroon; through the death of female aspiration in Bon's murder; and to the realization and denial of racial brotherhood in the Clytie-Rosa confrontation. The die is cast for the movement from the center: it is outward toward destruction through the lives of both the victims and the instruments of destruction. The racial dimensions of that destruction become clearer and clearer as the second half moves on. Though the topics of romance, marriage, and other male-female relationships and roles concern Rosa and Compson, Quentin and Shreve, and though incest is first thought to be the reason for Bon's death, the overriding issue comes to be race. It is Bon's attempted miscegenation rather than his attempted incest that causes his death. The bond between Henry and Bon was so strong that it could have borne the weight of a marriage between
brother and sister, but it was snapped completely by a little drop of Negro blood. It is the denial of racial brotherhood that leads to destruction. The novel moves from creation to destruction through the death of Bon, a prospective in-law in the first half, a part-Negro son and brother in the second half.

The arrangement of material brings the issue of race to the fore. It also creates a burden for the reader. The shifting back and forth in time and point of view creates the burden of remembering and sorting. The different focus in each chapter requires a flexibility on the reader's part that creatures of habit and conventional thinking resist. To read the novel is of necessity to become involved, to be continually searching for relationships between blocks of material, to be groping for the meaning of a newly-introduced and seemingly unrelated story. This structural involvement emphasizes the inescapability of the problem with which the novel deals. Rosa offers the excuse for telling about Sutpen that the material may someday be used by Quentin as the basis for a story and thus be entertainment for readers. Quentin feels she is only trying to explain the South's lost cause. It is, however, Compson's belief that the story must be told because Quentin is partly responsible for its happening that guides the arrangement of material. Rosa's stories and utterances only lead to questions. Why was Sutpen's influence on his children so demonic? Why was Charles Bon killed? Why did Judith respond in so stoic a fashion to his death? Why did Rosa break off her engagement to Sutpen? Who is in the mansion? Her material creates mystery and suspense, and, in that way, is entertaining, but the mystery is also a burden on the reader. Quentin's decision to
tell of the South by telling the story he heard from Rosa and then from
his father and then presumably from Henry Sutpen is an attempt to explain
the South; but the order of his material is not cause and effect, but
effect and cause, not sequential but impressionistic. Rather than
having the South explained to him by Quentin, the reader, like Shreve,
must find the explanation for himself. The burden of interpretation
results. The structure of the novel makes the reader responsible, and
the emphasis the structure places on the racial issue forces the reader
to deal with it as Quentin has to.

Because the novel creates a burden rather than a catharsis, it is
not a tragedy in the classical sense as some critics have suggested.
Because its central theme is race, it is necessary to qualify con-
clusions that the novel transcends the Southern theme, as Knox has
claimed,\(^1\) and that Sutpen's is an American experience, a position that
Brooks has defended.\(^2\) The structural method of involving the reader
argues against the conclusion of Hagan\(^3\) and others that the novel has
a frame story and an internal story. Quentin Compson of the modern
South is not telling a story of the old South; he is telling the story
of the South. He is not only telling the story of Sutpen; he is also
telling the story of himself. The merging of Quentin and Sutpen and
the South makes it difficult to distinguish the protagonist of the
novel, though many critics have decided on either Quentin or Sutpen.

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\(^1\)"William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!" p. 353.

\(^2\)Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 436.

\(^3\)"Déjà Vu," pp. 32-33.
The structure forces Bon into prominence as often as Suspen and Quentin, and there is even much justification for seeing Bon as the protagonist, such justifications as the title (Absalom was a son), the powerful effect of Bon's death, and the climactic revelation of his full identity. The novel is not so much the story of one man as of a people. Stewart's conclusion that the "Wash" story is a microcosm of the South is, as he has said, only partially true. The implication in this particular story that the failure of the South is the failure of its leaders is only superficial. The underlying cause of failure is not part of the story of Wash; and the "Wash" segment is a microcosm only in that it pictures the effect of a condition while keeping the specific condition veiled. Nevertheless, those who, like Stewart, have seen the novel in terms of its representation of the South, those who have elevated the mythical dimensions of the work, are on sound critical ground. The novel portrays the fall of a people into despair because they cannot hear the voice of hope or accept the possibility of redemption through affirmation of racial brotherhood. The result of such a portrayal is a Christian tragedy.

The novel is not only peculiarly Southern but thoroughly modern. Chapter after chapter relies on psychological ordering, impressionistic effect, montage arrangements. The chapters hang independently as components in a mobile do, yet they are part of the whole. Both within themselves and in relation to each other, they juxtapose conflicting

^"Apotheosis and Apocalypse," p. 60C.
pictures and views; the structure is thus open-ended so that the burden of interpretation is left to the reader. Those critics who have spoken of the novel as creating an antithesis have recognized the relative nature of the structure. In the center chapter, for instance, it is difficult to decide whether Rosa's words are meaningful articulations or incessant patter. The verbiage is both voluminously heavy and freely soaring. Rosa both affirms racial sisterhood and denies it, poetizes both hope (the summer of wisteria) and despair (the summer of Bon's death). Her chapter, like the novel, is illusory. In it, the central issue of the novel is veiled: the death of Bon is seen as being related either to romance or to the octoroon system, not to his race.

The unity in this mobile of separate and conflicting forms is in its psychological flavor, the ordering of material according to emotional rather than logical principles, and in its poetic techniques, the use of repetition, reflexive images, especially the ever-present images of black faces, the pervasive impressionism in use of language and arrangement of material. There is a unity, too, between the novel and the culture out of which it came, the response of Faulkner to the overriding issue of his place and to the technical developments in his craft. Finally there is a unity between this work and the body of Faulkner's work. Setting, character, theme, and techniques appearing in this novel are used in other works in the Faulkner canon, illustrating Faulkner's thesis that there is only one story to tell and that each division of
his work, whether it be chapter, story, or novel, is but one more manifestation of the single story: the overwhelming despair that results from man's inhumanity to man.

This despair is the last and prevailing note in *Absalom, Absalom!* The structure that insists on race as the principal issue also underscores the fruits of racial inhumanity, especially the death of Bon and the debilitating despair of Quentin. The letter in which Bon looks hopefully to the future is structurally followed by the announcement of his death. The hopeful note struck by Shreve in his prophecy is structurally surrounded by evidence of futility—the dead worm and the rigid Quentin. The weight of the structure destroys hope: the despair of man prevails.

Some critical readers have commented that the universe of *Absalom, Absalom!* is a deterministic one, justifying their comments by pointing to the presence of an idiot in the closing pages of the novel and to the references by Compson to a Stage Manager. However, the structure of the novel argues against these conclusions. The use of biography as a structural device in some of the chapters is evidence of an interest in man, and Faulkner uses biography to reveal motivation for the actions and reactions of men. In every case these motivations are social: man is responsible for the actions of his fellows. Faulkner's use of the quest as a structural device, too, places man in a responsible position. The failure of a Quentin to meet the challenge of a quest is the result of his own weakness, of his own refusal to affirm the possibilities of his native land; it is a failure of will. Further, the juxtaposition
of sympathetic and unsympathetic views of characters, the alternation of episodes of hope and of despair, and the succession of points of view are structural techniques that place the responsibility for interpretation on the reader. Here, too, is evidence of a belief in the responsibility of man. In the world of Absalom, Absalom man is responsible for his actions; and in his failure to respond affirmatively to the bond of brotherhood between himself and his fellow man, he makes the bond of despair an overwhelming reality.


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